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Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement

Emily Enderle

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Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement

Emily Enderle EDITOR

Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement

Emily Enderle, EDITOR

Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) Publication Series

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Foreword

*James Gustave Speth, Dean,
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies*

*Pilar M. Montalvo, Assistant Dean and Diversity Coordinator,
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies*

We were pleased when Emily Enderle approached us about her idea for this book. The book comes at the perfect time. Building an inclusive environmental community that spans economic status, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexual orientation cannot wait. We would all be well advised to look to our own organizations and activities to see where improvements can be made, interests fostered, and real dialogue and collaboration developed.

The public's renewed focus on environmental concerns, from climate change and clean energy to biodiversity loss and deforestation, provides a special opportunity to create a re-energized environmental community full of collaboration and inclusion. Environmental degradation in the United States can no longer be thought of as a concern of only the wealthiest of mainstream Americans. These issues affect all of us, and the solutions lie in our ability to bring as many people into the environmental community as possible. That will only happen if environmentalists broaden the agenda to encompass the concerns and needs of minority and other communities.

Van Jones, President of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, argues in his piece "Beyond Eco-Apartheid" in *Conscious Choice* that:

The idea of 'social uplift environmentalism' could serve as the cornerstone for an unprecedented 'Green Growth Alliance.' Imagine a coalition that unites the best of labor, business, racial justice activists, environmentalists, intellectuals, students and more. That combination would rival the last century's New Deal and New Right coalitions.

Here at Yale's environment school, we have recognized the importance of inclusion and diversity and are taking steps to improve our performance. The School has a strong role in training future environmental leaders. To this end, we are working to provide not only an inclusive learning environment, but also an education rich in diverse faculty, courses, research, internships, and cultural competency. We are the first to acknowledge that we are not yet where we should be.

Diversity initiatives (as suggested by a committee of faculty, staff, and students in 2004) are now integrated into the School's Strategic Plan, 2005-2009. We have had success in recruiting international students, with about one third of the student body originating from outside the United States. We have also increased our number of U.S. minority students and continue to focus strongly on this recruitment area. We do not yet "look like America," but we are making progress.

Our school has embraced Yale's overall efforts to diversify the faculty. With a number of initiatives underway in this area, including new efforts in faculty searches and greater support for faculty collaboration and research funding, we are putting an increased emphasis on this goal.

The Urban Resources Initiative (URI), based here at F&ES' Hixon Center for Urban Ecology, is doing critical work in community-based land stewardship and environmental education in New Haven. The success of URI is based on its fundamental understanding of the importance of community participation in ecosystem management, particularly in urban environments.

The excellent staff at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, who provide the daily structure that allows F&ES to function, have not been left out of these efforts. Our staff must be diverse and must also have a high level of cultural competence. These interactions are often the foundation of student, visitor, and faculty experiences at the school.

We are seeing the value of increasing our cultural competence here at the school: more support for all of our students and faculty, a developing understanding of how inclusive practices actually make organizations stronger and more relevant in today's world, and an acknowledgement that the environmental community should be doing more to broaden its base. We are taking a big step in this area by

having special sessions for faculty, staff, and students designed to build our cultural competency and inclusion skills. It is definitely a learning experience for all of us, but what we've found so far is a real openness to the dialogue and to these issues.

What we like most about Emily's book is its potential for impact across the environmental community. Understanding the importance of diversity is a crucial aspect of the environmental movement. We are confident that readers will benefit from the excellent chapters provided by many of the top leaders in the environmental community.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



James Gustave Speth, Dean and Sara Shallenberger Brown Professor in the Practice of Environmental Policy. B.A., Yale University; M.Litt., Oxford University; J.D., Yale University. From 1993 to 1999, Dean Speth served as administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and chair of the UN Development Group. Prior to his service at the UN, he was founder and president of the World Resources Institute; professor of law at Georgetown University;

chairman of the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality; and senior attorney and cofounder, Natural Resources Defense Council. Throughout his career, Dean Speth has provided leadership and entrepreneurial initiatives to many task forces and committees whose roles have been to combat environmental degradation, including the President's Task Force on Global Resources and Environment; the Western Hemisphere Dialogue on Environment and Development; and the National Commission on the Environment. Among his awards are the National Wildlife Federation's Resources Defense Award, the Natural Resources Council of America's Barbara Swain Award of Honor, a 1997 Special Recognition Award from the Society for International Development, the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Environmental Law Institute, and the Blue Planet Prize. Publications include *Global Environmental Governance*, *Red Sky at*

Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment, Worlds Apart: Globalization and the Environment and articles in *Foreign Policy, Foreign Affairs, Environmental Science and Technology, the Columbia Journal World of Business*, and other journals and books.



Pilar M. Montalvo, Assistant Dean, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES). B.A., Connecticut College; M.A. George Washington University; M.A. Harvard University. Ms. Montalvo's academic training is in social anthropology with a focus on indigenous peoples in the Americas particularly along the issues of ethnicity and nationalism. She has held several different research positions at the Smithsonian Institution, including work in

the repatriation of Native American human remains and sacred objects. Before coming to F&ES, Ms. Montalvo served as the Repatriation Coordinator for the American Indian Ritual Object Repatriation Foundation. She has also taught undergraduate anthropology courses at Connecticut College and Southern Connecticut State University on the issues of indigenous ethnicity, nationalism, politics, and gender.

As Assistant Dean at F&ES, Ms. Montalvo handles special projects for the dean and serves as his liaison, providing direction and assistance to the faculty, staff, students, alumni/ae, Yale community, other universities, corporations, donors, government officials and visitors. She is the Diversity Coordinator at F&ES and in this capacity coordinates all aspects of U.S. minority student recruitment, alumni/ae relations, and faculty hiring and serves as a confidential resource for students, faculty, and staff.

Framing the Discussion

*Emily Enderle, Master of Environmental Management '07,
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies*

It is an exciting time to be a member of the environmental movement in the United States. Large events and organizations, including the Super Bowl, the Oscars and Yahoo, are becoming carbon neutral. The largest global retailer, Wal-Mart, is currently going green.¹ Mainstream magazines, including Sports Illustrated and Vanity Fair, are featuring environmentally-focused cover stories and editions.² Beyond the financial incentives and the celebrity glamour associated with being green, many previously unengaged segments of the population, including religious communities, people of color and people from different socio-economic classes, are becoming increasingly interested in participating in the movement's efforts.

Currently, however, there is a lack of diversity and inclusivity in environmental institutions and our movement. This is a systemic problem. Diversity is about strengthening the movement we are dedicated to by making it resilient and capable of adapting, regardless of what we face in the future. Widespread understanding of the values that diversity can provide is essential to enhancing our collective effort and the world, yet such understanding is still absent in far too many places.

During my time at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) the school has made substantial efforts to increase diversity among the staff, students and faculty. This is because F&ES,

¹ In their U.S. stores, Wal-Mart has committed to increasing the efficiency of their vehicle fleet by 25 percent, reducing energy use by 30 percent and solid waste by 25 percent in three years. Gunther, Matt. The Green Machine. *Fortune Magazine*. July 31, 2006. Available at: http://walmartstores.com/Files/WM_Fortune_Green_Machine.pdf.

² Wolff, Alexander. Going, Going Green. *Sports Illustrated Magazine*. March 6, 2007. Available on the World Wide Web at <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/more/03/06/ec00312/index.html>. May 2007 *Vanity Fair*. The Green Edition. Available at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/toc/2007/toc200705>.

like many environmental organizations nationwide, recognizes that the institution falls substantially short of where an environmental organization should be in terms of diversity. With a faculty of 43, 18 of whom are tenured, there are only one female and one international tenured faculty members and no domestic faculty of color. In a school where the majority of students are women, 16 percent are domestic minorities, and 30 percent are international students, these faculty statistics are disheartening.

Upon noticing this, in the fall of 2005, I began to speak with several members of the faculty and students about the state of diversity at the school and within the movement. The individuals that I talked to agreed that diversity is important and needs to be improved at the school, yet when I asked why, very few were able to generate a reply. The realization that many prestigious environmental professionals didn't know why diversity is important, despite their professed belief in its importance, initially made both the professors and me uncomfortable. This was followed, however, by open conversations among faculty members and students about reasons why diversity is important to their individual disciplines, the school, and the movement. It surfaced that many faculty members and students are interested in being engaged in diversity work, but are unfamiliar with how to be effectively involved and nervous about doing the wrong thing.

The realization that many prestigious environmental professionals didn't know why diversity is important, despite their professed belief in its importance, initially made both the professors and me uncomfortable.

These encounters and their lessons motivated me to speak with colleagues throughout the country about the state of their organizations, and to examine literature about the demographics of the environmental movement compared to that of the U.S. population. Many colleagues reported similar circumstances at their organizations, and the statistics illustrated that this movement is not diverse compared to national population statistics. Study results presented in *Toward a New Ecological Majority* indicate that, of the nation's Ecological Base (10 percent of the population and 15 percent

of the electorate), 89 percent of members are white, 82 percent are older than 35, 78 percent have attended at least some college and 26 percent earn more than \$80,000 year.³ According to United States Census Bureau, in 2000 more than 31 percent of people in the U.S. were not white (12.7% Black, 12.6% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian and 2.5% Other).⁴

It surfaced that many faculty members and students are interested in being engaged in diversity work, but are unfamiliar with how to be effectively involved and nervous about doing the wrong thing.

National exit polls from the 2004 U.S. presidential election indicate that nearly 25 percent of all voters were non-white – 77 percent White, 11 percent Black, 8 percent Hispanic/Latino, 2 percent Asian and 2 percent Other. It is important to consider the power minority constituencies embody and how that power will continue to grow in the future. In 2010 one in every three people is projected to be non-white and by 2050 it is projected that one in every two people will be non-white.⁵ These trends are what Marilyn Loden identifies as our demographic destiny – which occurs when the projected demographic shifts in the population “necessitate that organizations value diversity, since the majority of new entrants into the labor force will be women, people of color, and immigrants.”⁶

One additional tidbit of information also resonated with me. In the Spring 2007 edition of SAGE Magazine, there is a top-seven list of Environmental Icons, listing environmental greats like John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold, Teddy Roosevelt and Rachel Carson.⁷ Next to each icon’s name, the author pointed out the race and gender of these leaders. Rachel Carson is the only one on the list that is not a

³ *Toward a New Ecological Majority*. American Envirionics. Fall 2006. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

⁴ U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin. <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/natprojtab01a.pdf>. Accessed from the World Wide Web May 2007.

⁵ National Exit Poll Results: 2004 Presidential Election. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/elections/2004/graphics/exitPolls_national.html. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

⁶ Loden, Marilyn. 1995. *Implementing Diversity*. McGraw-Hill: 91.

⁷ *SAGE Magazine*. Top Seven Environmental Icons List. Volume 2, Issue 1. 28. Available at: http://environment.yale.edu/posts/downloads/o-u/SAGEVol2_Iss1_Web.pdf.

white male. I found myself agreeing with the list and I recognize that the foundation of this movement was built on the achievements of these icons, but it was an incredibly poignant moment of realization for me. I don't think this movement can survive if our top environmental icons continue to fit this historic pattern.

Study results presented in *Toward a New Ecological Majority* indicate that, of the nation's Ecological Base (10 percent of the population and 15 percent of the electorate), 89 percent of members are white, 82 percent are older than 35, 78 percent have attended at least some college and 26 percent earn more than \$80,000 year. According to United States Census Bureau, in 2000 more than 31 percent of people in the U.S. were not white (12.7% Black, 12.6% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian and 2.5% Other).

These statistics and concepts — coupled with the realization that environmental organizations and professionals do not understand why diversity is important and that people are interested in engaging in diversity work but don't know how — inspired me to create this book and to distribute it to environmental organizations nationwide. This book identifies why the principle of diversity is important to integrate into the environmental value system and proposes methods to do so.

With the assistance of some excellent sources, an extensive list of environmental leaders was generated. Those individuals, identified by multiple people as leaders that “get” diversity and can articulate why it's important, were then asked to write pieces about why diversity enhances their discipline and the movement. Within one day of the distribution of submission invitations, I received several confirmations from busy environmental leaders, all very enthusiastic about the project. Few of them are diversity specialists. Most are environmental professionals who have valuable experiences and vision that they wish to share with others in this movement.

The individuals who have contributed are a diverse collective. They represent many disciplines, many types of organizations, different

regions, and focus their pieces on various types of diversity and inclusion. They share one common element – a deep passion for and commitment to improving the environmental movement in ways that facilitate diversity and inclusivity. This commonality created a strong foundation on which to piece together their perspectives. Each piece considers a particular topic. The pieces were constructed so to be able to be read alone or as part of a more complete perspective.

The contributors were selected because they are inspirational leaders that have volunteered to be messengers about an ideal that has yet to become mainstream. It is their willingness to explore the difficult question of “Why exactly is diversity important to your discipline and to the movement” and to articulate clear answers that I hope will resonate with people nationwide. There is a common understanding among them, one that acknowledges the strength diversity brings to their organizations and the movement they care so much about. I hope the momentum will shift, aided by the kind of understanding provided in this book, and a wider movement will begin to become truly inclusive.

I look forward to being a part of, and playing a role in, constructing such a movement.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is here that I want to acknowledge the assistance of the many incredible people who made this book possible.

First and foremost, I want to thank all of the contributors who contributed to this project despite their busy schedules. Their submissions and vision are invaluable to this movement and their dedication truly admirable. Their enthusiastic and gracious participation have been truly inspirational and insightful.

A special thanks to James Gustave (“Gus”) Speth, Dean of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES); Pilar Montalvo, Assistant Dean and Diversity Coordinator at F&ES; Jane Coppock, Assistant Dean at F&ES and Editor of the Yale F&ES Publication Series; and my faculty advisors, Brad Gentry, William Burch, and Paul Draghi, for their assistance in constructing and executing this project. Their assistance and support in every stage of this project and my academic/professional time at F&ES is very much appreciated. Without their assistance this project never would have come to fruition.

Many individuals and organizations have also contributed financially to making this project a reality. I extend a special thank you to Jim and Sandra Leitner for their generous support. Thank you to Eugénie Gentry, Director of Development at F&ES and Gordon Geballe, F&ES Associate Dean of Student Affairs, who helped me find funding. Additionally, thank you to Buddy Fletcher of Fletcher Asset Management, Inc., F&ES Carpenter Sperry Fund and the F&ES Publication Series for their contributions. I also very much appreciate the financial and personal support from my F&ES colleagues and Student Interest Group (SIG) members. These students represent the Multi-Ethnic Student Association SIG, Industrial Environmental Management and Energy SIG, Climate SIG, Coalition on Agriculture SIG, Food and Environment SIG, Land Use Coalition at Yale SIG, the F&ES Student Affairs Committee and the Yale Chapter of the Society of American Foresters, all organizations that chipped in to help cover expenses.

For their voluntary editing assistance I thank Yale colleagues Michael Kavanagh, Dahvi Wilson, Matthew Oden, and Erica Lorenzen. Further, thank you Janet Thomson (Kearns & West, Inc.), Jamye Ford (University of California, San Francisco), and F&ES colleagues Todd Gartner and Terry Baker for always being available to help me explore a variety of topics. My highest praise extends to F&ES Publication Series Editor Jane Coppock and independent copy-editor Roger Gridley, who offered invaluable and objective copy and content guidance. I also thank Dorothy Scott for the excellent work and dedication she provided in page layout.

Additionally, thank you to the following, who helped to identify outstanding environmental professionals who are leaders in diversity work: Gus Speth (F&ES), Pilar Montalvo (F&ES), Chip Giller (Grist), Marcelo Bonta (Center for Diversity & the Environment) Angela Park (Diversity Matters) and Kevin Doyle (independent consultant, workshop leader, and co-author of *The ECO Guide to Careers That Make a Difference*). I also appreciate the time Cristina Balboa, (PhD candidate at F&ES and Senior Environmental Leadership Fellow) and Lori Villarosa (Director of Philanthropic Initiative for RacialEquity.org) shared with me to set me on the right track. Finally I would like to acknowledge the Environmental Leadership Program (ELP). Several ELP fellows contributed to this project, a testament to the great diversity work their organization is doing.

Leveraging diversity effectively enabled me to compile this inclusive publication that explores many facets of diversity, something I could never have done alone and certainly not in the course of one academic year. The benefits of leveraging diversity can be gained at many scales, from completing an individual project to improving a single institution to strengthening an overall movement. Why? Because, at any scale, drawing on all the resources available enhances our ability to fulfill duties true to the missions of our organizations and our movement.

The benefits of leveraging diversity can be gained at many scales, from completing an individual project to improving a single institution to strengthening an overall movement. Why? Because, at any scale, drawing on all the resources available enhances our ability to fulfill duties true to the missions of our organizations and our movement.

To really be a dynamic movement, we need to be forward thinking, and one of the principles of being forward thinking needs to be inclusivity. As articulated in this volume, diversity and properly executed inclusivity can provide organizations and the movement with the benefits of preservation, efficacy, efficiency, differentiation, adaptability, and competitive advantage necessary for keeping organizational and movement evolution alive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Emily Enderle received a Master of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies in 2007. At Yale, she concentrated in policy, economics and law, focusing on energy issues and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Prior to her time there, she worked as an environmental consultant, specializing in energy issues, in the San Francisco office of Kearns & West Inc. She

graduated with high honors in environmental studies from Oberlin College in 2003. Increasing diversity and inclusivity within the environmental movement is her personal passion – one she hopes more members of the environmental movement will embrace and actively support.

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Diversifying the American Environmental Movement

Marcelo Bonta, Director, Center for Diversity & the Environment

Charles Jordan, Chairman, Board of Directors, The Conservation Fund

SUMMARY

As the nation continues to diversify, the environmental movement is left with one of the greatest challenges it will face this century. In order to become an influential and sustainable movement for generations to come, it needs to successfully address its diversity crisis. In this essay, the authors analyze the problem, acknowledge past and current diversity efforts, argue that the movement needs a more comprehensive and strategic approach, and stress the importance of diversifying in the right way. They provide action-oriented solutions at the movement, organizational, and individual levels. They emphasize that diversifying is not an option, but rather a necessity, if the American environmental movement is to remain relevant.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, people of color, environment, environmental movement, challenge, conservation, environmental diversity, Latino, African-American, Asian-American, black, Hispanic, race, inclusion, leadership, multicultural, generation, action, solutions, recommendations

One hundred million people . . .

If we had the opportunity, would we, as the American environmental movement, want to engage an additional 100 million people most of whom are ready and willing to support us? The answer should be obvious, yet we are not taking advantage of an opportunity that sits before us. As of July 1, 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were over 100 million people of color living in the U.S. We are doing a poor job of connecting them to our cause even though numerous polls and surveys show that people of color support environmental issues, in many cases, at a higher level than the general public.^{1,2,3,4} This lack of inclusion sits at the heart of the movement-wide diversity crisis.

We are doing a poor job of connecting them to our cause even though numerous polls and surveys show that people of color support environmental issues, in many cases, at a higher level than the general public.

John Muir said, “Tug on anything at all and you'll find it connected to everything else in the universe.” Therefore, if we are all connected, how is it possible that we have overlooked 100 million people? The environmental movement cannot leave out that many people and expect to succeed. For the most part, today’s movement is not intentionally excluding people of color. However, some of the movement’s and nation’s early histories actually may provide evidence to the contrary and reveal insight explaining our current dilemma.

¹ Fairbank, John, David Metz, and Lori Weigel. 2004. Poll of Hispanic/Latino Voters in Conservation Funding Measures and Land Preservation Efforts for The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land. Oakland, CA: Fairbank, Maslin, Maulin, and Associates.

² Bendixen and Associates. 2002. California Latino Wilderness Public Opinion Survey. Coral Gables, FL: Bendixen and Associates.

³ Los Angeles Times. 2002. (3/7/2002) Exit Poll Voter Demographics: How Propositions 40 and 45 Fared Among Voters. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Times. <http://www.latimesinteractive.com/pdfarchive/state/468grph3.pdf> (accessed April 29, 2007).

⁴ Mohai, Paul. 2003. African American Concern for the Environment: Dispelling Old Myths. *Environment*. June. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1076/is_5_45/ai_102681078 (accessed April 29, 2007).

Today's diversity crisis is an issue of invisibility. Ralph Ellison, in his novel *Invisible Man*, states, "I am invisible, understand, because people refuse to see me." In essence, the movement has struggled with diversity because we fail to recognize and value the past and current contributions of people of color. We also fail to realize that diversifying is crucial to the survival of the movement. We are not making a conscientious effort to be inclusive. A number of dedicated individuals and organizations are trying to move the diversity agenda forward. However, diversifying the environmental movement needs to include every organization, business, agency, foundation, and academic institution that is working on environmental issues. If it does not, then we will not succeed. We see other entities and sectors of society attempting to diversify, like corporations, local and federal agencies, and universities. Although they face many challenges, the fact is that they are making an intentional and concerted effort. There is no reason why the environmental movement cannot do it as well.

While understanding the importance of diversity is imperative, the broader issue we should focus on is "How do we respond to one of the environmental movement's greatest challenges of the 21st century?" We need to come to terms with the fact that the U.S. will continue to diversify whether we follow suit or not. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2050, people of color in this nation will more than double, growing to almost 220 million, and will almost certainly comprise the majority of the population. The political and social implications of these changing demographics are vast, and we, as a movement, need to respond accordingly and immediately. We need a movement that appeals to and benefits all Americans from all walks of life. Environmentalism needs to be intertwined in all aspects of American culture. It won't be an easy road to follow, yet change is not a question. It is a "must" if we want a movement that is sustainable and relevant in the public and political consciousness. We have a huge opportunity and responsibility before us. How and when we respond will determine the fate of our movement. It is imperative for us to develop a strategy to sufficiently address the diversity crisis and create sustainable, lasting change.

THE PROBLEM

The Problem within Organizations

While 100 million people of color amounts to about 33 percent of the U.S. population, environmental organizations severely lack an

equitable representation. In a study examining diversity in 158 environmental institutions, the Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative found that 33 percent of mainstream environmental organizations and 22 percent of government agencies had no people of color on staff.⁵ Another study found that people of color make up only 11 percent of the staff and 9 percent of the boards for organizations that are members of the Natural Resources Council of America.⁶ To many environmental leaders, this last set of statistics actually seems high and does not reflect other considerable problems among environmental institutions that go much deeper than numbers. People of color are often hired as support staff and placed into positions not marked for leadership potential. The few people of color who are a part of a professional staff often leave environmental organizations (and at times the movement altogether) because of unfortunate experiences. Many feel unwelcome and uncomfortable in institutions because of the homogeneous culture both within organizations and the movement.

In a study examining diversity in 158 environmental institutions, the Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative found that 33 percent of mainstream environmental organizations and 22 percent of government agencies had no people of color on staff.

Most organizations fall short in devoting adequate staff time, money, and resources to improve their diversity situations. Organizations that want to diversify often do not know what to do, where to start, and eventually either do nothing or venture down a path destined for failure.

Movement-Wide Problems

The diversity crisis goes further than issues within organizations. First, substantial gains on outreach to communities and groups of color,

⁵ Taylor, Dorceta. 2005. *Diversity in Environmental Institutions: Summary Results of the MELDI Studies*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment.

⁶ Stanton, Robert. 2002. *Environmental Stewardship for the 21st Century: Opportunities and Actions for Improving Cultural Diversity in Conservation Organizations and Programs*. Washington, DC: Natural Resources Council of America.

especially in the areas of cultural competency and equitable collaboration, have yet to be achieved. Second, tension between mainstream environmental organizations and environmental justice groups is still prevalent. A widespread belief is that people of color are not an important constituency because it is assumed that they do not care about the environment. However, polls and studies reveal the contrary. For example, a recent poll showed 77 percent of Latino voters (versus 65 percent of all voters) support “a small increase in taxes” to “protect water quality, natural areas, lakes rivers or beaches, neighborhood parks and wildlife habitat.”⁷

An exit poll for a 2002 California \$2.6 billion bond issue for water quality enhancement and open space protection revealed 77 percent of Blacks, 74 percent of Latinos, and 60 percent of Asians (as opposed to 56 percent of Whites) voted “yes”.⁸ Furthermore, organizations and professionals do not feel they have time to work on diversity issues, especially since many mistakenly believe it to be an option. Also, diversity activities are not well publicized among the environmental community. For instance, not many environmental professionals have heard of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services’ Building Capacity Through Diversity Project⁹ or The Nature Conservancy’s Building Relationships with Communities of Color Western States Diversity Project.¹⁰

An exit poll for a 2002 California \$2.6 billion bond issue for water quality enhancement and open space protection revealed 77 percent of Blacks, 74 percent of Latinos, and 60 percent of Asians (as opposed to 56 percent of Whites) voted “yes”.

These projects reveal insightful information about various diversity issues, including partnerships and outreach. Finally, a lack of funding

⁷ Fairbank, Metz, and Weigel. Poll of Hispanic/Latino Voters in Conservation Funding Measures and Land Preservation Efforts for The Nature Conservancy and Trust for Public Land.

⁸ Los Angeles Times. (3/7/2002) Exit Poll Voter Demographics: How Propositions 40 and 45 Fared Among Voters.

⁹ Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services. 2005. Building Capacity Through Diversity: Towards a More Diverse and Just Environmental Movement in Michigan. Dearborn, MI: Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services.

¹⁰ Pyramid Communications. 2005. Building Relationships with Communities of Color: The Western States Diversity Project. San Francisco, CA: The Nature Conservancy.

dedicated towards diversity efforts in environmental organizations severely limits the movement's scope to diversify.

Past and Current Diversity Efforts

Working on improving diversity issues in the environmental movement is not new. Organizations such as Outward Bound Adventures (since 1962) and the Environmental Careers Organization (1990-2007) have worked for years, providing young people of color with positive outdoor and work experiences. Diversity issues in the environmental field received national attention in 1990 when civil rights organizations wrote a letter to "the Big 10" (a group of large influential mainstream environmental organizations), challenging them on their ignorance of environmental issues afflicting communities of color and calling on them to hire more people of color onto their staffs and boards of directors. The environmental justice movement began in 1991 to combat the environmentally racist actions of corporations and governments. There have also been a number of articles, research, and discussion sessions since the 1980s devoted to the topic.¹¹ A late 1980s survey revealed that many leaders from over 500 environmental organizations "feel that the lack of racial and cultural diversity in their own organizations and throughout the environmental movement makes the movement less powerful and less effective in accomplishing its goals."¹² There is no doubt that these early efforts raised awareness on diversity issues, yet the same patterns, behaviors, and experiences within the movement continue to contribute to the diversity crisis. Emerging leaders from the younger generations are facing and reliving the same diversity challenges as the established leaders of the Baby Boomer generation. We need to break this cycle of exclusion.

Today's climate of diversity activities is promising. Dialogue and interest have been more prevalent recently. Regional collaborative diversity efforts in Washington, D.C., Boston, and Michigan have been effective in engaging environmental organizations in various diversity efforts, such as creating multi-cultural environments, catalyzing collaborations, and inspiring other diversity initiatives. On a national level, a growing number of organizations, including Trust for Public

¹¹ Jordan, Charles, and Donald Snow. 1992. Diversification, Minorities, and the Mainstream Environmental Movement. In *Voices from the Environmental Movement: Perspectives for a New Era*, Donald Snow, ed. Washington, DC: Island Press: 71-109.

¹² *Ibid.*

Land, National Audubon Society, Land Trust Alliance, and the Environmental Leadership Program have been initiating organizational diversity assessments and initiatives. Recently, numerous conferences and workshops, such as the *National Summit on Diversity in the Environmental Field*, *Diversity in the Environment for the Next Generation*, and the *Diverse Partners for Environmental Progress* series of national summits and regional roundtables, have taken place to address a broad spectrum of diversity issues. These include diverse partnerships, internal organizational diversity issues, and specific issues that people of color encounter while working for environmental organizations.

Clearly, there has been a recent groundswell of activities and interest in moving diversity issues forward. Unfortunately, these activities still are not enough. We need them to feed into a comprehensive, strategic, and effective approach, and we need every environmental institution's commitment to work on diversity issues. Working together, we can most efficiently use our resources and build on each other's accomplishments and strengths. We are not effectively using existing information from past and current efforts, organizations, and people. One of our main challenges will be to figure out how to collect, synthesize, and disseminate that information in order to effectively facilitate change and progress.

The Next Ten Years

The next ten years will be crucial in terms of whether we get it right or not. We need to ride the wave of momentum of the numerous diversity activities and take advantage of pushing diversity issues forward while the interest is high. Over the next ten years, many in the Baby Boomer generation are expected to retire, thus passing the mantle of leadership to the younger generation. While in their existing leadership roles, the Baby Boomers need to build a foundation and pass their wisdom to the next generation. Their experiences and lessons learned are crucial to making substantial headway. As the nation grows, so will its diversity, and we do not want to fall further behind. By 2020, the population of people of color will rise to an estimated 135 million and comprise 37.5 percent of the nation's citizens. In ten years, if we find ourselves in a similar place, facing the same diversity issues as today, then we have failed miserably and the sustainability and relevance of our movement will be gravely at risk.

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THE BENEFITS OF DIVERSIFYING

The Right Thing to Do

Many in the movement believe that diversifying is our moral responsibility. They feel that the current state of diversity in the movement does not accurately represent their beliefs and values. We need to create a movement that parallels and promotes our ideals and our vision of the world. Achieving an equitable, inclusive, unified, and democratic movement is our moral imperative. Peter Forbes, Executive Director of the Center for Whole Communities, supports this notion. He states, “We have a moral responsibility and a higher standard of fairness to meet because our work is about something that is as important as the land. Because of our success and maturity as a movement, we have a moral responsibility now to think and act differently.”¹³

A New Constituency

Diversifying is not only an ethical decision, but a wise one as well. As the nation’s population of people of color continues to grow, communities of color will continue to have mounting influence on society and politics, including the distribution of public finances, the way cities develop and grow, and the strength and creation of environmental laws and policies. We must work with these communities if we are to succeed. Diversifying the environmental movement means expanding our constituency base, translating into political wins, higher public support, more members, a larger volunteer base, richer partnerships, and more financial support. In California, the Latino and African-American voters were critical for the approval of the state’s \$2.6 billion bond measure for open space protection in 2002.¹⁴ Diversifying the environmental movement will provide us with mass appeal and keep us relevant far into the future.

¹³ Soto, Christina. 2006. Fostering Inclusiveness in the Land Conservation Community. *Exchange*. 25 (1): 8-13.

¹⁴ *Los Angeles Times*. (3/7/2002) Exit Poll Voter Demographics: How Propositions 40 and 45 Fared Among Voters

More Effective Organizations

Diversity can also improve the effectiveness of the movement and organizations. A diverse workforce may provide more creative approaches, enhance innovation and problem-solving, and produce higher quality ideas. It brings a broader base of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge to help with organizational strategies, problems, and activities. Diversity also builds broader networks and taps new resources. Diversifying will improve the quality of staff, expand our connections to funding sources, and increase our effectiveness in working with communities and organizations of color.¹⁵

Communities of color will continue to have mounting influence on society and politics, including the distribution of public finances, the way cities develop and grow, and the strength and creation of environmental laws and policies.

As we continue to gain a better understanding about the importance of diversity and begin to convince our leaders that this is crucial, we will find an increasing amount of entities wanting to diversify. The next step will be trying to figure out not only how to diversify, but how to diversify in the right way.

HOW DO WE DIVERSIFY?

Wanting to diversify and figuring out how to do it are two separate notions. Addressing “how” to diversify is a difficult, ongoing, transformative journey. However, we cannot rush the process. We will not completely diversify the movement before our tenures are over. We need to take our time and build a strong and sturdy foundation so that the following generations have something with which to work. We need to trust that the following generations will value what we have done and will continue to build upon what we have started.

In order for diversity efforts to be sustainable, leaders need to view diversity as a top priority. Diversity needs to be interwoven throughout organizational operations, such as programs, projects, initiatives, mission and policy statements, recruitment, staff retention,

¹⁵ Cox, Taylor. 2001. *Creating the Multicultural Organization: A Strategy for Capturing the Power of Diversity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

partnerships and collaborations, outreach, and work experiences for young people.

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Cultural Change

Creating cultural change within environmental institutions and the movement is imperative to diversifying, and especially retaining people of color. It could be daunting to be the single person of color or one of a few in an organization that is homogenous in its appearance as well as thinking and culture. Transforming into a multicultural movement requires actively addressing diversity on an ongoing basis and providing workplaces where all staff feel comfortable and are attaining their true potential. It entails becoming culturally competent and adept at understanding different ways of acting and communicating. A multicultural organization provides various diversity trainings and regular times for open discussions. Environmental institutions that become multicultural will discover that people of color will want to work for them and stay for the long term and will find it easier to work with all communities and organizations.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the main area in which many environmental organizations focus their diversity efforts. Hiring people of color at all levels, including the executive level and board, is essential. However, the amount of energy many organizations put into recruiting a diverse staff may be misplaced. Organizations will most likely find more success in recruiting people of color and diversifying if they work on diversity on multiple fronts, including changing the organizational culture and working equitably with communities and organizations of color. Limiting diversity efforts to recruitment, especially at only entry level positions or for support staff, is insufficient and will fail almost every time.

Outreach

Diversifying also means effectively reaching out to communities of color. If we want to start engaging people of color, we need to meet them where they are and speak to their environmental values. We will

need to invest time building relationships and start early. We must also choose our messengers wisely because the messenger may actually be more important than the message. We will need to understand and work through the community's main information sources, which may be the local church or the lady who lives on the corner. We must be prepared by understanding the generalities of polls and research, but not making generalizations and assumptions with the individuals we meet. We will need to realize that language matters, whether communicating in another language or simplifying our environmental language. For example, instead of using the term "non-point-source pollution," talk about clean water. Instead of saying, "biodiversity," mention animals and plants.

Limiting diversity efforts to recruitment, especially at only entry level positions or for support staff, is insufficient and will fail almost every time.

Partnerships and Collaborations

To effectively reach out to communities of color, environmental institutions will need to expand their partnerships and collaborations. They will need to work with groups that already effectively work with communities of color, including organizations of color, such as Latino Issues Forum, urban parks, and schools. These groups, many of which are led by people of color, have a proven track record of successfully working with communities of color. They have earned the respect and gained the trust of these communities. Most importantly, these partnerships need to be based on equity, meaning all parties equally share resources, power, and decision-making responsibilities.

Diversifying also means effectively reaching out to communities of color. If we want to start engaging people of color, we need to meet them where they are and speak to their environmental values.

Environmental institutions seeking to diversify will need to partner and work together to share information, efforts, and lessons learned about diversifying while more efficiently using resources and keeping costs down. Diversifying on your own is extremely difficult. We often find organizations that are attempting to diversify, essentially trying to reinvent the wheel and aborting their effort because the hill became too difficult to climb. Working together will ease the difficulty and provide more lasting results.

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Foundations are an integral part of diversifying, not merely because they can provide much needed funds but because they are another segment of the movement looking for diversity guidance. The Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), a leader in promoting diversity in its over 250 foundation members, has found that many environmental foundations want to diversify. According to a recent survey, 75 percent of EGA members agreed that “‘increasing diversity in the field of environmental philanthropy’ [is] either extremely important or somewhat important.”¹⁶ If foundations see this diversity need in their funded organizations as well, then they can work on making progress together.

Educational Pipeline

Working along the educational pipeline by providing opportunities for young people of color from kindergarten to graduate school is essential to achieving a diverse environmental community for generations to come. We need more organizations like Environmental Learning for Kids in Denver and Outward Bound Adventures in the Los Angeles area who help raise the next generation of environmental

¹⁶ Goldstein, Rachel. 2003. Casting a Wider Net: Over a Decade of Diversity Commitment at Environmental Grantmakers Association. Environmental Grantmakers Association Newsletter. Winter. <http://www.ega.org/resources/newsletters/win2003/diversity.html> (accessed April 29, 2007).

stewards by providing positive outdoor experiences, specifically for young people of color. Organizations can utilize the services of the Student Conservation Association who help place college and graduate students of color in internships in various environmental organizations and government agencies across the nation. It is essential for organizations to provide paid internships devoted specifically to people of color since a number of students of color come from low to middle income backgrounds and need a paying job to survive.

A Sustainable Approach

Diversifying on many fronts, especially on cultural change, recruitment, outreach, partnerships, and the educational pipeline, will be more sustainable than focusing a diversity effort in one area. Leadership buy-in and dedicated resources (i.e., staff time and money) are also critical to maintaining a diversity initiative. On the other hand a lack of resources should not keep an organization from making headway. Although limited in effectiveness, organizations can still make steps forward by working within existing programs and policies. This could entail providing diversity sessions or workshops at annual conferences or expanding outreach to communities of color.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSIFYING THE RIGHT WAY

Simply working on diversity issues is not enough. We need to make sure we are doing it the right way, or we may actually hinder progress rather than help. For example, do not engage communities of color only when we want something and do not take without expecting to give something of value in return. This approach may not only inhibit future relationships with that community but may also discourage the community from working on any environmental issue. Diversifying the environmental movement may call for a different approach. We must have humility and courage to approach communities and work with people that are new to us. We must also understand that the situation for every environmental institution is not the same and that approaches need to adjust accordingly. Our reasons to diversify need to be genuine and focused to be successful. We need to move forward with good will, good intentions, and humility.

Simply working on diversity issues is not enough. We need to make sure we are doing it the right way, or we may actually hinder progress rather than help.

Sometimes organizations are apprehensive to take the first step because diversity is a complex issue to grasp and because they are afraid to proceed in a wrong way. These trepidations, while understandable, should not be excuses from diversifying. However, as we proceed cautiously, we need to recognize when we are traveling down a wrong road, admit fault, and change our course of action. Franklin D. Roosevelt provides some excellent advice, “[i]t is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.”

In order to diversify the right way, we will need to utilize existing resources and learn from past and current efforts. There are organizations and projects, such as Diversity Matters, the Kenian Group, and the Center for Diversity & the Environment, that are devoted to helping the movement diversify. Numerous diversity consultants, some specializing in working with environmental institutions, are also excellent resources. Learning from past diversity efforts will give us insight into challenges and opportunities as well. We can learn from the experiences of organizations who have attempted to diversify or who are currently pursuing diversity initiatives. People of color, communities of color, and organizations who work with communities of color may provide very important advice and feedback on diversity efforts. Using these resources will help us diversify and give us insight into whether we are proceeding in the right way or not.

As we proceed cautiously, we need to recognize when we are traveling down a wrong road, admit fault, and change our course of action.

As the movement continues to diversify, we will need to create accountability measures and/or measures of diversity (both quantitative and qualitative) that will help us ensure that we are following the right path. An organization or partnership devoted to

providing technical assistance on what to do and how to do it would be extremely useful.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Many of us are motivated, highly interested, and ready to move forward, but need to figure out what exactly needs to be done and how to do it. Each organization, institution, and sector is unique and may have specific ways of diversifying that logically fits within their current paradigm. Some may concentrate on outreach, while others may concentrate on internal organizational issues because they struggle with organizational effectiveness. However, as a movement, we must focus our energy in four major areas in order to initiate effective change:

- (1) **Cultural change** (in the environmental movement and within environmental institutions.) We need to start creating a multicultural movement that is relevant to all Americans.
- (2) **Partnerships and collaborations.** We need to seek strategic alliances both within and outside the movement. Within the movement we need to collaborate with each other on our diversity efforts, so we can move forward synergistically and grow exponentially. We have a great deal of catching up to do. We also need to work across movements, including the labor movement, civil rights movement, and faith movement. Expanding our list of partners will lengthen our reach, improve our understanding, and ensure our relevance.
- (3) **Engage young people.** We need to connect young people of color to nature through environmental education programs and organizations and provide work experiences for high school, college, and graduate level students. We currently have a major opportunity to help mold the youngest generation of environmental stewards, since the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 45 percent of children under age five are people of color.
- (4) **Connect the generations.** We need to unify the generations that are currently working within our movement and cultivate emerging leaders of color. Experiences, wisdom, and lessons learned need to be passed on from one generation to another if we are to effectively move forward

on the diversity continuum. There are numerous established leaders from the Baby Boomer generation who have worked on diversity issues, yet there is a gap in the passing of that knowledge to the next generation of emerging leaders. Many emerging leaders are discouraged by and uncomfortable with the current state of the movement. It does not represent their values and their view of America. Many hope, but wonder, if the Baby Boomers will provide the leadership that is adequately needed to move us in the right direction. There are a number of inspirational and good-hearted people in the Baby Boomer generation who are doing some excellent work on diversity. Each one of them needs to take it upon themselves to identify and mentor emerging leaders that can carry the mantle forward.

Each organization, institution, and sector is unique and may have specific ways of diversifying that logically fits within their current paradigm.

In order for the movement to carry out these recommendations, we will need adequate funding and an organization (whether a new or existing one, a partnership, or council) that can serve as the central hub for diversifying the movement. It will be charged with carrying out movement-wide diversity actions and periodically assessing our progress on achieving diversity goals. The organization's responsibilities could include:

- Providing technical assistance and guidance on what to do and how to do it in the right way.
- Facilitating the creation of accountability measures and/or measures of diversity (both quantitative and qualitative) that will help us ensure that we are following the right path.
- Reporting on the “state of diversity in the environment,” (i.e., measuring the movement’s progress and recommending where we need to adapt accordingly).
- Providing information and resources that will help organizations diversify.

- Disseminating funds strategically towards diversity efforts.
- Facilitating information exchange and networks of those working on diversity issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Every organization, including large and small non-profits, businesses, academic institutions, and government agencies, has the potential and capability to move forward on diversity issues. Before they can proceed, they must first attain leadership support and a commitment of money, staff time, and resources. While organizations may need to devote funds from their operational budget, foundations also have a responsibility in providing grants that will help organizations diversify. Once an organization is ready to start working on diversity issues, its first step should be to conduct a diversity assessment to establish a baseline from which to work. The assessment would help identify where the organization currently stands on diversity issues, its needs, its goals, and tools to diversify. It may also include researching the diversity activities of other similar organizations. Resources, such as the Center for Diversity & the Environment (www.environmentaldiversity.org), can help inform organizations of the array of efforts occurring. A diversity action plan should then be created to implement the assessment's recommendations. The plan should include periodic evaluations of progress towards diversity goals. Diversifying the environmental movement requires a commitment from every organization and individual in every sector and segment.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

We, as individuals within the movement, have the most important roles and the greatest responsibility. Our individual beliefs, values, thought processes and actions make-up the movement. Therefore, we need to hold ourselves accountable for transforming the environmental movement. While it is urgent to begin diversifying our movement immediately, we should not feel that we have to do it all now. This will be a long process. Even small steps from each of us can take us a long way. Here are some actions we, as individuals, can take to push forward on diversity issues:

- **Find opportunities to diversify within your spheres of influence.** Figure out what you can start doing today. For example, if you have access to discretionary funds or control of budgets, earmark money towards diversity activities. If you work on outreach, learn how to become culturally competent and expand your outreach activities to include communities of color. If you participate in an organizational strategic planning process, incorporate diversity strategies and language into vision statements, the mission, and goals of the organization. Of course, if you are someone who has major authority, you can start implementing the broader recommendations for the movement and organizations described earlier.
- **Broaden your thought processes.** Think long term and with an expansive vision. Constantly question your business as usual. Ask yourself questions, like “For whom are you protecting these lands?” “What kind of movement are you going to hand over to your children and grandchildren?” “When thinking of the communities or constituencies you serve, who do you think of? Who should you think of?” “When you advertise a job opening to your network, who is included (or not included) in that network?” “What type of people would find working at your workplace appealing or not appealing? Why?”
- **Find allies.** Talk to others at your workplace and to people working on diversity issues outside your organization. Find and/or create a network of folks with which you can comfortably discuss diversity issues. Organize a diversity council at your workplace or organize a regular gathering of like-minded folks outside of your organization. For example, a group of environmentalists of color in Portland, Oregon, called the Young Environmental Professionals of Color, meet monthly to connect and discuss various diversity and environmental topics that affect them.
- **Engage organizational leadership.** Ask them to adopt diversity as an organizational priority. Ask for a commitment of resources, especially money and staff time.
- **Start building relationships with communities and organizations of color now, especially before you may actually need their help.** Offer something that may be useful to them.

- **Seek opportunities to broaden your experience, expand your network, and continue learning.** Some conferences, such as the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference and the Environmental Grantmakers Association annual conferences, have offered one-day pre-conference diversity workshops and trainings. Other conferences may provide individual, or a series of, diversity sessions. The Conservation Fund and Land Trust Alliance have started offering a diversity training course for land conservation organizations. Become involved in efforts that bring a broad range of organizations and people together, such as the Environmental Diversity Working Group in Washington, DC, and the Diverse Partners for Environmental Progress national summits and regional roundtables. Numerous diversity resources can be found on the websites of organizations, such as the Center for Diversity & the Environment, and the Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative. Reading reports, such as the *Soul of Environment-alism and Environmental Stewardship for the 21st Century: Opportunities and Actions for Improving Cultural Diversity in Conservation Organizations and Programs*, provide beneficial learning opportunities.

We can all do our part on an individual, organizational, and movement-wide level. We need to immediately take advantage of our willingness to diversify and to understand diversity. We have a great deal of work to do. However, we are not as far behind as we may think. We are only three to four strategic moves away from making major headway. Remember we can do more by working together than we can alone. We must keep our efforts simple, continue to move forward, make sure we diversify in the right way, and we will make important progress.

CONCLUSION

As the nation continues to diversify, the environmental movement is left with one of the greatest challenges it will face this century. Will we diversify so that we can be successful and relevant for generations to come or do we continue along our path of diversification apathy to our own peril? We have no choice. Diversifying is not an option. It is a necessity. In the very least, it means survival of the environmental movement. At most, it means creating a healthy, influential and sustainable movement. Our response to the diversity challenge today

will have reverberations and repercussions for generations to come. We must invest our resources at once or our children and grandchildren may inherit a world with dwindling resources and a movement with no significance in the modern world. Rabbi Abraham Heschel, a civil rights activist, once said, “the opposite of good is not evil, the opposite of good is indifference.” Apathy has ruled our approach to diversity for too long. It is time to move from inaction to action. We owe it to ourselves, the environmental movement, and the American people to get it right. The future of environmentalism and our future generations are at stake.

If nothing else, we need to remind ourselves of one thing – 100 million people . . . and counting.

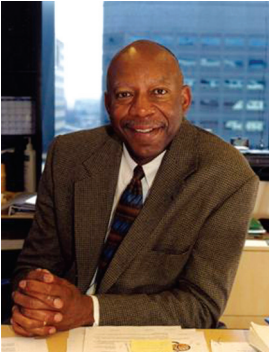
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helping the Fund and its partners protect more than 880,000 acres of wildlife habitat, historic sites, greenways, wetlands and public open space. As the Director of Portland Parks and Recreation from 1989 to 2003, he worked closely with the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers, local directors of Parks and Recreation around the nation, federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations to ensure that our nation's legacy is no less than our inheritance. He was appointed by President Reagan to the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, by President Clinton to the American Heritage Rivers Advisory Committee and has also served on the National Forest Foundation Board, the National Park System Advisory Board, the Land Trust Alliance Board of Directors, and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Board of Directors. An inspirational speaker and compelling advocate, Mr. Jordan has spoken at numerous events and has written several articles on people of color and the environmental movement.

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Mission Critical: A New Frame for Diversity and Environmental Progress

Angela Park, Founder and Director, Diversity Matters

SUMMARY

The values and vision of environmentalism, diversity, and inclusion are inextricably linked. In the 21st century, the ability of environmental organizations to catalyze a positive common future for all people, beings, and places will depend on the commitment of leaders and organizations to make these explicit, intentional connections in every facet of their work. Diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence need to become major priorities at the organizational level if environmental and social change movements are to marshal the innovation, creativity, and expansive reach necessary to handle the complexity and scope of environmental challenges. Organizational and movement-wide impacts are at risk if diversity is not seen as mission critical.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, inclusion, cultural competence, organizational change, organization development, mission-driven rationale, vision, success, culture change, leadership development, professional development

As a Generation X latchkey kid, I watched a lot of television in the 1970s. Now, I live in a community that lacks access to cable television and am generally limited to gleaning pop culture via the Internet. But, every now and then, a random phrase pops into my head from my trove of childhood TV. As I think about diversity and the environmental movement, one image and phrase comes to mind. I see the flailing arms of the Robot in *Lost in Space*: “Warning! Danger! Danger, Will Robinson!”

The Robot may lack gravitas as a messenger chiming in on environmentalism’s future, but wikipedia.com’s description of this oft-repeated utterance is apt: “This catch phrase currently serves as a facetious method to inform an associate that they are about to make a stupid mistake – that there’s a factor he or she overlooked which ought to be taken into account.”

What is the mistake we are making as environmentalists, environmental leaders, environmental organizations, and as a movement? What is being overlooked that needs to be taken into account?

Diversity.

THE VISION THING

Donella Meadows was a stickler for vision. Dana, as she was known, was a best-selling author, syndicated columnist, systems dynamics researcher, and educator who believed no major endeavor should begin without a clear vision for the work to follow. Many years ago, from afar and without her knowledge, I adopted Dana, as a mentor. I never met her before her death in 2001, but today, I live in an eco-housing community that she co-created with many of my neighbors. That was the impact of a woman I never met but who guided and inspired me.

In our U.S. and nonprofit cultures of time-pressured, seemingly endless doing, we rarely take time to step back, reflect, and clarify or reassess the vision we are working toward. Without a compelling vision as context and horizon for my daily work, I find it harder to manage the inevitable stresses and frustrations that come with swimming upstream – the obstacles those of us who aspire to change the world face every day.

In a 1994 presentation, Dana marveled about how we “share our cynicism to total strangers. We can complain, we can talk about everything that will never work, but we can’t share our hopes, dreams, deepest longings” of “the world we would like to live in without being named naïve, unrealistic, idealistic.”¹ But, as Dana espoused, contemplating a vision has practical benefits. She said:

My experience is that I never know at the beginning how to get there, but as I articulate the vision, put it out, share it with people and it gets more polished and more real, the path reveals itself. And it would never reveal itself if I were not putting out the vision of what I really want and finding that other people really want it too. Holding on to the vision reveals the path.²

I was reminded of the power of vision again, at a recent meeting of the fledgling Institute for Inclusion where organization development (OD) practitioners envisioned a world where inclusion is common practice. I sat in my uncomfortable conference issue chair – my feet dangling as they always do in any seat made for people of average height – and closed my eyes: What will an inclusive world look like? What will it feel like? How will people behave? What things will be the same? What will be different?

The first images I had were of people amidst greenery. I saw a city. There were people out and about, walking on sidewalks, playing and eating in parks, sitting on benches and front porches. It was a lush landscape of trees and flowering bushes, community gardens big and small. It felt different because there was an array of people, many whom I don’t typically see, individuals who were blind or deaf, women in wheelchairs, amputees, and the elderly. I saw mixed-use development at its best, a range of housing types and sizes located near workplaces, stores, and libraries. People stood in line to board clean hybrid buses, no diesel spewing out the back. People had many visible differences – age, race, gender, disability – and they were talking, playing, and working together. People felt safe, and I felt safe watching them. The people I saw were different but they had equal access to the good life I could see – beautiful parks, healthy food, clean air and

¹ Donella Meadows: *Envisioning a Sustainable World*, speech/presentation at Third Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Ecological Economics, San Jose, Costa Rica, October 24-28, 1994. The video of the presentation can be viewed at www.uvm.edu/giee/beyondenvironmentalism/Meadows.mov.

² *Ibid.*

water, thriving workplaces. In my vision, it was a given, a foundational skill that people were comfortable and skilled engaging across difference. In my vision, I knew there was a lot less pain and suffering.

After the exercise I wrote down much more, but as I shared my vision with the others in my assigned small group, I had some realizations. Fundamentally, my vision was based on my belief in a common future, the shared destiny that ties all people, beings, and places together. To me, that's the heart of inclusion. We share a future, and the reality I create for others – people and living creatures unlike me – is what I make for myself. The visioning exercise reminded me that I couldn't separate inclusion from environmentalism or environmental work from diversity. For my vision to become reality, there must be an intentional, strategic, sustained effort on behalf of the environmental movement, its organizations and leaders, to make diversity and inclusion foundational assets, of all we do.

We share a future, and the reality I create for others – people and living creatures unlike me – is what I make for myself.

OUR VALUES, OUR VISION

Most environmentalists fight every day for the rights of the planet, the subordinated natural places and animal species who are abused, neglected, allowed to die, or actively killed because so many people see those places and beings as “them” not “us.” Their fates decline because of an adherence to mental models that tell us that our destiny is not tied to theirs. I see this same mental model applied to people who are different. This subordination and separation exists among humans at the group level. The us vs. them dynamic is the same, whether them is an endangered species or ecosystem or poor people, people of color, gays and lesbians, women, or people with disabilities. It's not just about individual behavior – niceness across difference – it's about power, the institutional power and structural discrimination and the invisible ways that privilege and this domination mindset play out and are built into all human systems and institutions. It's a structure that must be altered if this movement is to succeed.

Until we address what divides us, we will not be able to collaborate with allies who share many of our values but little of the field's current

demographics. The authors of *Soul of Environmentalism* eloquently made the argument that the future success of environmentalism lies, in part, in our ability to create transformative alliances with “new leadership that transcends boundaries.”³ In many cases, they argue, movements with intertwined histories are failing to leverage collective power because of our inability to see our shared history and values. I believe it’s because we have not acknowledged the impact of oppression and group-level power in our movement and because we don’t often talk honestly and deeply about our differences. Such failures prohibit the creation of constructive, authentic partnerships.

In my work with progressive organizations, I have to make the case that at the organizational level “the right thing to do” isn’t enough. Values do matter, however, and for the environmental movement, unlike some institutions, diversity is also about authenticity. Most of the people I know in the environmental movement believe in social justice and equality for all people and tie their professional work to their values. Many people choose their life’s calling because they seek integration of ethics and action. They want to create the world they envision. Organization and movement-wide work on diversity and inclusion, of which personal learning and skill building is an integral part, aids in the synergy of these ideas.

Toward that end, how can we authentically practice what we preach? How can we speak about social justice and our progressive values (as many environmentalists identify politically) if we have environmental organizations that look like exclusive clubs?

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An exclusive culture comprised of people with privilege in our society is not a manifestation of those values. Furthermore, if we create and sustain organizations that are not more representative of the diversity of this country it gives easy ammunition for our critics to paint us as hypocritical and elitist. This, in turn, decreases our potential impact and limits our capacity to expand our constituencies.

³ Gelobter, Michel et al. 2002. *The Soul of Environmentalism*. Downloadable at: <http://www.soul ofenvironmentalism.org/>: 27.

CHANGING REALITIES

Diversity and inclusion matter to any organization in the 21st century whose work is complex, requires innovation, and aims to impact large numbers of people. Additionally, environmentalists and our institutions have unique reasons for needing to embrace fully the work of creating inclusive organizations and leveraging the gifts of a diverse community of professionals, activists, donors, and volunteers to influence people in all walks of life.

The complexity of the task before environmentalists is monumental. We are trying to change mindsets, policies, and behavior at every level. Our collective aim is to integrate the consideration of environmental impacts into all human endeavors, including the decisions of individuals, communities, companies, nations, and the global community. This complexity requires a vast array of skills and expertise, and an ability to collectively reach into every community and facet of society. As new technologies emerge and cultural norms shift, environmental work has to adapt to keep up. We need organizations that are as effective and innovative as possible. We need a workforce and volunteers who are willing, able, and supported in doing their absolute best work. We can't afford to miss out on a person's creativity or ingenuity because they don't fit our type based on limited notions of who is an environmentalist, who can do the job.

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Diversity helps create an environment that fosters innovation and creativity, thinking that matches the challenges that we're aiming to find solutions for. The problems we aim to solve aren't static, nor are they simple. The very nature of environmental challenges raises the bar for how imaginative we need to be, not only in crafting workable solutions but also in selling them to the world, from individuals and the cars they buy to the purchasing decisions of billion-dollar public companies.

As the end of the first decade of the 21st century approaches, predictions of the changing racial demographics of the United States

are commonly known and oft repeated: People of color will soon be the majority in the United States. In fact, people of color are already the majority in a number of U.S. cities. In contrast, studies of the demographics of the environmental movement show that people of color are underrepresented in comparison to their numbers in the U.S. civilian workforce. The environmental movement is behind.

THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONS

The organizational level is a particularly relevant level of system for work on diversity and inclusion in the environmental field. We don't have one environmental movement. Rather, we have a complex network of organizations and coalitions that are connected, often loosely, by commonality of issue area, size, or geography, among other features. No one tent exists that convenes organizations working on wilderness, regulatory policy, land preservation, green buildings, environmental justice, climate change, toxics, and green investment or business practices. To change our movement, we need individuals who believe in the value of diversity and inclusion. However, we won't have large-scale impact until those values are integrated into organizational policies, practices, and culture.

Organizations today are being forced to live by their wits . . . A single person's brilliance or a single group's point of view is no longer enough to sustain an organization's growth. Tomorrow's successful organizations will be those that harness the collective and synergistic brilliance of all their people, not just an elite few . . . Many organizations will fail to make these changes because the changes seem too radical.

Those organizations will not survive.⁴

In *The Paradox of Choice*, social theorist Barry Schwartz argues that individuals make choices from risk aversion more than potential gain, a salient detail of a more complex economic principle called prospect theory.⁵ If it's true that "losses hurt more than gains satisfy," as Schwartz writes,⁶ then sharing this Miller and Katz quote and articu-

⁴ Miller, Frederick A. and Katz, Judith H. 2002. *The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Power of Diversity*. Berrett Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco.

⁵ Schwartz, Barry. 2004. *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*, Harper Perennial, New York: 67-73.

⁶ Ibid.

lating a few hypotheses about our potential losses may have the impact I seek in this essay.

Here are a few of my hypotheses about potential losses the environmental movement will face if diversity and inclusion are not made organizational and movement-wide priorities:

1. Environmental issues will be marginalized based on the movement's visible demographics. Environmental issues and environmentalists will be perceived as white, upper-middle class, suburban, "boutique-y," diminishing our capacity to build a broad, diverse political and societal constituency. Our ability to weave values and actions of environmentalism into every facet of life will be hobbled and we will be unable to defend against our marginalization.
2. The environmental movement will wither without the new ideas, innovation, and broader perspectives diversity brings. Outdated approaches, single viewpoints, and one way of being, thinking, and doing will predominate and the movement will calcify.
3. Talented people will leave organizations and environmental work, based on their experience of being undervalued, unappreciated, burned out, and pressured to conform to organizational cultures that do not allow them to be who they are or do their best work. Increasingly, they will flee work environments where covert and overt hostility to differences becomes untenable as other more inclusive workplace options become available.
4. Environmental work will be the domain of the upper-middle class, people who can "afford" to work in environmental professions, further separating the movement and its organizations from the class-based realities of the vast majority of people in the U.S. and around the world.

As an enviro – an organizer, policy wonk, and manager in environmental organizations – for twenty years, I have seen ample anecdotal evidence that these hypotheses about the future are current reality. At the same time, I believe we need to do more work to quantify and test these hypotheses more rigorously.

Prospect theory notwithstanding, I still believe positive visions are motivating. There is a growing community of environmentalists

working to integrate diversity and inclusion into the fabric of the movement. In my current work as a consultant, trainer, coach, and organizer, I'm driven by the desire to test the following positive hypotheses at the organizational level:

Hypothesis: An organization that integrates diversity and inclusion in their internal operations and programs will:

1. Have greater competitive advantage in instilling the values of its mission and making its message relevant and resonant with the U.S. public and global audience. They will win more often and in more arenas because they will have the skills to engage with the diverse public and political constituencies we aim to serve and engage.
2. Have wider opportunities for grants and successfully solicit support from a more diverse base of individual donors and other contributors, ultimately increasing their fundraising and development outcomes. As more funders look for diversity and cultural competence, these organizations will rise to the top and, at a minimum, avoid being cut off from funding because they don't meet basic criteria. They will tap into currently ignored individuals, expanding their membership, networks of financial contributors, and program and event participants.
3. Become preferred employers in the field, increasing their capacity to retain and recruit staff from all backgrounds. They will be known for being dynamic, creative, healthy places to work where people are valued and employees' work lives are enriched because of the diversity of their colleagues and the skills they have learned to engage across difference and leverage the diversity they have.
4. Have more members and constituents who align themselves with the organization. They will have the capacity to connect with people of a wide array of backgrounds and based on their knowledge and experience, they will have more effective communications and networking capabilities.

Of course, we could make many more hypotheses and it will take years to test these hypotheses in the environmental and social change

arena, but more and more people are game to participate in this real-life research, from the smallest interactions to the most expansive organizational policies. While research on how these hypotheses are playing out in the nonprofit sector lags behind studies of the private sector, there is much to learn from other analyses. These hypotheses are modeled loosely on those proposed and tested by sociologist Cedric Herring, who studies the business case for diversity. In a recent study, *Does Diversity Pay?: Racial Composition of Firms and the Business Case for Diversity*, based on analysis of the National Organizations Survey, he found that more racial diversity was correlated with increased sales revenue, higher number of customers, larger market share, and greater profits relative to competitors.⁷ “There is now tangible evidence that there is a positive relationship between the racial diversity of firms and their business functioning,” Herring concluded.⁸

Of course, diversity is about more than race. Also, there are differences in how private sector profitability is measured from mission-driven social change outcomes. But Herring’s work and that of many others has relevance to issues of diversity and inclusion in the environmental field.

DIVERSITY STARTS WITH MISSION

In my experience, environmental organizations typically look at diversity issues from the perspective of numbers and from a definition that equates diversity with the existence of people of color within an organization. Regularly, I hear from colleagues who say “I need more people of color in my organization. Can you find me a person of color for this job opening or to join our board?” While they may have good intentions, to me, it’s important to approach this differently: Why do diversity and inclusion matter to this organization? How are diversity and inclusion necessary for the organization to achieve its mission? How is the creation of an inclusive culture necessary for the performance and well-being of employees, board members, and other internal stakeholders? How will the organization fail and what are the risks that will need to be managed if diversity and inclusion are not foundational organizational assets?

⁷ Herring, Cedric, *Does Diversity Pay?: Racial Composition of Firms and the Business Case for Diversity*, August 2006, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois at Chicago and Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois. Available at <http://www.diversityinc.org/ssi/pdf/DoesDiversityPay0806.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Until an organization clarifies its mission-driven rationale for diversity and inclusion, effort spent diversifying its staff and board – by race or any other group membership – can be ineffective and oftentimes has unintentional negative impacts. Bringing in people who are different and expecting them to think, act, and be like everyone else is oppressive and confines the diversity those people bring. Without an effort to change organizational culture, recruiting difference for the sake of numbers can leave people feeling tokenized and unsupported as an “only” or one of very few people who stand out for their difference. Rosabeth Moss-Kanter’s studies show that when women make up less than 15 percent of the workplace, they are more likely to be stereotyped and tokenized based on their gender than in groups with more women. Sociologist Herring argues that “the experiences and consequences of tokenism hold true for other” types of differences as well.⁹ Diversity without inclusion may change the staff photo, but it can also create personal harm and organizational risks if not part of a larger, coherent organizational commitment. Efforts to diversify have a much more powerful, positive impact when they’re connected to culture change and building skills to engage and work across difference.

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Diversity and inclusion can’t be seen as random work that can be dropped when priorities change. They need to be seen as mission critical, in the context and service of an organization’s mission. If they’re not mission critical, why do the work? If it’s not a part of the organization’s work, they should be honest and transparent in saying so to manage expectations within the organization and outside of it. That too, of course, is a choice.

Numbers do matter, and race is one of many important differences that make a difference in our society. However, representational diversity – the numbers – is no proof that organizations are “there.”

⁹ Ibid.

There is no “there,” in this work, no being done, no time when you check off the box and call it a day, just as none of us ever reach the personal environmental equivalent of the Holy Grail. Every OD consultant can name organizations that look great on paper or in their pictures, yet do a far from admirable job of diversity and inclusion upon examination: how people are treated, the organizational culture, and the consistency by which they practice internally what they preach externally.

A clear, widely embraced, and jointly-defined, mission-driven rationale is necessary because the integration of diversity and inclusion can't rely on the rationale that “it's the right thing to do.” While connecting diversity to organizational values, and making an organization's work consistent with beliefs of employees and leadership is a good thing, it is not sufficient to marshal the organizational resources to engage and sustain this work. The “right thing to do” easily gets lost amidst seemingly more pressing organizational priorities. It requires an inextricable tie to the organization's mission to sustain the lifelong work of culture change and partnering across difference. The mission has to drive the integration of diversity and inclusion throughout an organization's programs and processes and the creation of an intentional – not de facto, status quo – culture where people feel valued and respected, enabling them to do their best work, as Katz and Miller stress in their book, *The Inclusion Breakthrough*.¹⁰

While there are often similarities in organizations' mission-driven rationales, each one is unique because of the specificity of each organization's mission. What often matters most is the process of creating the rationale, getting people aboard and creating ownership of the work of diversity and inclusion. True ownership is only possible when an organization's employees and board members see themselves in the work. Charitable expressions of helping others – “those people” – via diversity initiatives aren't enough. Individuals have to believe that they will benefit from organizational change. They must feel that the organization will be a better place for everyone, not just people in subordinated groups, if the culture is more inclusive. They must see opportunities for their own professional and personal development as they develop new skills and are enriched by a more dynamic environment because of increasing diversity in the organization.

¹⁰ Miller, Frederick A. and Katz, Judith H. 2002. *The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Power of Diversity*. Berrett Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco.

Charitable expressions of helping others – “those people” – via diversity initiatives aren’t enough. Individuals have to believe that they will benefit from organizational change. They must feel that the organization will be a better place for everyone, not just people in subordinated groups, if the culture is more inclusive. They must see opportunities for their own professional and personal development as they develop new skills and are enriched by a more dynamic environment because of increasing diversity in the organization.

Organizations across the environmental movement are taking on the long-term strategic work of integrating diversity and inclusion into their culture, policies, practices, and skill sets. At Diversity Matters, we exist to support this growing community, providing resources and services to make diversity and inclusion foundational assets of environmental and social change organizations and leadership. We have a vision for strengthening environmental and social change through diversity and inclusion, and we’re creating a movement for people who share our vision to make it reality.

Books have been written about the phases of work this typically entails, but these are a few of the steps organizations need to take.

- Clarify the mission-driven rationale for diversity and inclusion.
- Assess the state of diversity and inclusion within your organization. What is the current state?
- Decide where you want to go, what you want to do, and what skills and resources you need to get there.
- Build skills, knowledge, awareness, and find support for implementing what you want to do.
- Integrate and institutionalize – build diversity and inclusion into the fabric of everything the organization does, ensuring the work is sustained.

WORK THAT IS FOREVER

More than 10 years ago, I went to a meeting where David Crockett, a former member of the Chattanooga City Council, concluded a talk by saying, “It takes all of us and it takes forever.” This pithy line is as relevant to the work that I do now on diversity and social justice, as to what I did then on policies to create sustainable communities.

A few months ago, when I sat in that uncomfortable chair envisioning an inclusive world, another thought came to my mind. In my lifetime, I hope “environmentalists” disappear. I hope we won’t need that term to describe a relatively small group of people on the planet because that group will include everyone. The values and actions of environmentalism will be so embedded in every day thinking and living, that it will be taken for granted. That will not happen until we see the connection between what we do as environmentalists and what it takes to make it possible for people to walk freely in the world, able to share their gifts and unconstrained by discrimination. It won’t happen until we live up to integrating environment, economy, and equity so that equality doesn’t continually fall off the table.

We can lead by creating that space in environmental organizations. In that work is our own liberation and ability to reach new collective heights of impact for the world we want to see, to live in, and to pass on to those that follow. We can heed the Robot’s warning. The danger will be averted because we paid attention and changed our course.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Angela Park is an independent consultant and founder and director of Diversity Matters, a nonprofit organization that aims to make diversity and inclusion foundational assets of environmental and social change leaders and organizations. In addition, she serves as a consultant with the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group and Elsie Y. Cross Associates and is a writer with articles published most recently in *The Diversity Factor* and *Grist Magazine*.

Ms. Park brings government, nonprofit, and private sector experience to her expertise on diversity and inclusion, organizational culture change, sustainable development policy, environmental justice, community development, and leadership. She has testified before Congress and state legislatures; consults to foundations, community-based organizations, national social and environmental policy organizations, Fortune 50 companies, and educational institutions; and lectures at universities across the country. Previously, she worked at The White House in both terms of the Clinton/Gore administration, directed state level sustainable development policy initiatives at the Center for Policy Alternatives, and co-founded and served as deputy director of the Environmental Leadership Program.

Ms. Park participated in the inaugural class of the Donella Meadows Leadership Fellows Program, graduated from the NTL Institute's Diversity Practitioner Certificate Program, and was named a Young Woman of Achievement by the Women's Information Network. She lives on an organic farm and 270-acre ecological co-housing community in Vermont.

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A Personal View on the Importance and Imperative of Diversity Work

*Felicia Marcus, Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer,
The Trust for Public Land*

SUMMARY

Mainstream environmental and conservation organizations have been talking about the importance and challenge of “diversity” for years now without tremendous progress. A sincere and sophisticated approach to diversity is essential to the current success and future relevance of the movements. The author gives both a personal and organizational perspective on the subject as an incentive to action and some thoughts on making that action effective. Her personal experience in diverse working environments leads to a heartfelt belief in the importance of diversity work for the land conservation movement as a whole and for individuals. One organization’s early efforts are described as an example that may be accessible and instructive to others.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, environmental movement, conservation movement, death of environmentalism, generational diversity, consciousness, Tom Bradley, Los Angeles, parks, community gardens, community, land conservation, diversity experts, multicultural

INTRODUCTION

For years, diversity has been a topic of discussion in, and about, the environmental and land conservation communities. There have been conferences, exhortations from the philanthropic community, and truly sincere efforts on the part of many good-hearted people in both communities. Those efforts include hiring some great individuals and expanding diversity on Boards of Directors. Unfortunately, all too often those hires have not stayed for long, and some organizations express frustration or regret over their inability to attract diverse applicants for jobs. There is, fortunately, a growing field of experts on diversity in environmental organizations who can give candid assessments of the problem and suggestions for success. Some are authors in this volume. There is also a growing list of organizations and individuals engaging in these efforts.

I write as a participant in the environmental community working on this issue for over 20 years in a variety of roles. I am currently a senior manager in an organization committed to being a place that truly embraces and celebrates diversity, while recognizing that there is much work to do to achieve that end. We are also committed to becoming an employer of choice for people who want to conserve land for people and want to do it with a diverse set of colleagues with whom they can collaborate effectively in making a difference in the world. We know that this is a long-term commitment and that we need to approach our work with humility. As such, what follows is more personal observation than expert “how to,” with our work being offered as one example of a work in progress. In my view,¹ unless the land conservation community, and the environmental community more broadly, embraces a more sophisticated view of “diversity” and acts to become more relevant to a multi-generational, multi-racial, and further multi-dimensional constituency, we will go the way of the

¹ The opinions in this essay are solely the opinions and observations of the author, speaking for herself. This piece is written as one person’s personal view and an organizational example. Neither the author nor the organization claims expertise. Opinion, observation, and experience are all that are offered. For those, a great measure of thanks are owed to the late Juanita Tate, Manuel Pastor, John Murray, Dennis Nishikawa, Red Martinez, Myrlie Evers, Ed Avila, Michel Gelobter, Carl Anthony, Laura Yoshii, Clay Bravo, Steve Etsitty, Wendell Smith, Sadie Hoskie and many others. I also wish to thank my many colleagues at EPA with whom I worked for years on developing a greater consciousness and trainings about race, gender, sexual orientation, and age in particular while working on real equity issues in the agency. I look forward to what my colleagues at TPL and I will learn together.

dinosaurs in the next decade or two, to be replaced by new organizations created by the next generation of activists who are tired of “waiting for the world to change.”² If, on the other hand, we do this work well and in earnest, we will become more vibrant and effective organizations with staying power.

In my view, unless the land conservation community, and the environmental community more broadly, embraces a more sophisticated view of “diversity” and acts to become more relevant to a multi-generational, multi-racial, and further multi-dimensional constituency, we will go the way of the dinosaurs in the next decade or two, to be replaced by new organizations created by the next generation of activists who are tired of “waiting for the world to change.”

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

In my professional life as a public interest lawyer, community organizer, and government official, I have had the opportunity to work repeatedly in multicultural environments. Those experiences have been fun, educational, humbling, and uplifting. They have been my happiest work experiences and my most rewarding. In some instances where I have worked with an already diverse staff, the issues have included communication, conflict resolution, promotion and retention. In other cases, increasing diversity, or making diversity an issue to even think about, has been the first threshold. Whatever the setting, this work has always required lots of intention, listening, and awareness.

These experiences have demanded that I be open to learning and open to questioning my own assumptions about what others think. They required more listening and question asking at times than talking (hard for me). They have required setting aside my assumptions about people, history, and how others would judge the same set of events. My experiences have left me with the firm

² Mayer, John. “Waiting on the World to Change,” *Continuum*, Aware Records, 2006.

conviction that working with colleagues who have a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, and who are open to learning with *and from* each other, is the most dynamic and inspiring atmosphere to be a part of. It is also the best situation in which to develop personally and professionally.

My experiences have left me with the firm conviction that working with colleagues who have a diverse range of backgrounds and experiences, and who are open to learning with *and from* each other, is the most dynamic and inspiring atmosphere to be a part of. It is also the best situation in which to develop personally and professionally.

As a young public interest lawyer working in Los Angeles on environmental issues during an early period of the environmental justice movement in the mid-1980s, I had the opportunity to work in settings where racial diversity was a key issue. I also had the opportunity to work in collaboration with activists from South Central and East Los Angeles. It was not, however, until I had the privilege of working within the administration of Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley that I had the personal experience of working in an organization with a truly diverse power structure and diverse staff.

Mayor Bradley's administration was filled by appointees from widely varying racial, ethnic, religious, gender, age, class, sexual orientation, and physical ability backgrounds and experience. Diversity in appointments was a key priority of the Mayor's administration. He referred to LA as a wonderful "salad bowl" rather than "melting pot," where together we made a marvelous mix, retaining our unique characteristics rather than blending into one. It made a difference. The issues that rose to the top of our priority lists were different. The discussions on every given subject were different. How we talked about issues was different. In my department, where the leadership was completely diverse by race, gender, and age, we had conversations that went to the heart of why one person could see an issue so very differently from another based on experiences in the very same city.³

As my colleagues and I awarded contracts, mediated employee and community disputes, promoted and disciplined employees, honored employees and community members, and prioritized our scarce time, we struggled with each other at times to see why our reactions to things were so different, and changed our perspectives to take each other's into account. The result was a department that set environmental records, while also awarding contracts to women- and minority-owned businesses, assuring that promotions within the department were not unconsciously prioritizing white males, and putting environmental siting equity at the top of our priority lists.

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Later, when at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), I worked with a very diverse staff and a management team that became more diverse in time. We had a critical mass of people working on these issues and we were able to have myriad cross-training events. We also had the opportunity to expand the agency's work to respectfully engage with sovereign tribes and environmental justice groups. We devoted full time trainers internally to help us work more effectively with tribes and communities of color where environmental justice was a very real issue. We did some very good work, learned from our mistakes, and made the agency more relevant to the people it serves.

At a very basic and personal level, working in a diverse environment is much more fun, life-enhancing, educational,

³ We served on the Board during a time when the Supreme Court was limiting when government could award contracts, among other things, to favor minority- and women-owned businesses and during the period encompassing the Rodney King beating, trial, and subsequent civil disturbances. We were also engaged in implementing one of the country's largest scale waste reduction and recycling programs in response to an early victory of the environmental justice movement, where a large scale plan for waste incineration starting in largely African-American South Central Los Angeles had been defeated by a coalition of environmental justice and traditional West Los Angeles environmental groups.

challenging, and engaging than working in one that is not. Each experience becomes more complex, but also more rich. In my view, having that kind of dynamic learning experience is the point of life's voyage. We spend far more than forty hours a week at work as professionals in this movement. We should strive to create dynamic, life-enhancing settings to work and mature in.⁴

WHY THIS WORK IS ESSENTIAL IN THE LAND CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

There is a long and noble history of land conservation in America. It has been bipartisan and bicoastal. It has been fostered by private non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dating back to the formation of the first land trust, the Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts in 1890. Since then, the movement has grown to encompass national and international land conservation groups of great size, including The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land (TPL), and The Conservation Fund, along with more than 1600 smaller localized land trusts devoted to protecting a special geography or type of place.⁵ NGOs are now joined by a chorus of governmental agencies at the local, state, and national level. Collectively, we "save" landscapes ranging from a small community garden to several hundred thousand acre tracts of forestland. We protect these lands with a combination of public and privately raised dollars.

Members of this movement are both proud of past accomplishments and passionate about the race against time to protect places of biological, historic, and cultural significance. That pride and passion can work against us in truly seeing the need and opportunity to adapt to the present. Doing so requires holding on to that pride and passion and evolving to meet the needs of today and

⁴ In my experience, people who think there is only one way to be or to see things miss a lot and waste time trying to make the world and people fit into their idea of reality rather than being open to other ways of seeing things. They make the mistake of thinking that all they know is all there is. Anyone who sees it differently must be wrong, or mistaken, or somehow deficient. While this seems to make people feel safe, confident, and happy with themselves, it actually projects insecurity or lack of intellectual curiosity to outsiders who know better. It reminds me of someone who thinks they are on top of the world when they have mastered level two of a video game, and think there are only two levels when there are actually ten. There are always more levels.

⁵ These smaller land trusts are also supported by the national Land Trust Alliance. <http://www.lta.org>.

coming decades. Making the time, and making the mental space, to work on issues of diversity can prevent the movement from being so trapped in the pride of our past, and passion for our work, that we miss the opportunity to thrive in the future (or the present).

In the 100-plus years of the conservation movement, especially the last 40 years of organizational growth in the modern conservation movement, the world around us has changed. The movement started with people of means idealizing and protecting the wildness of landscapes and memory, or protecting key hunting areas. Then new organizations were created and grew to encompass objectives of biodiversity and other scientific principles, recreational objectives, viewshed protection, historic and cultural site preservation. In ever more cities, it includes creating or refurbishing urban parks, playgrounds, and community gardens. It now even includes clean up of toxic sites and demolition of structures to make way for open space for passive or active recreational use.⁶ Despite this disciplinary evolution, the makeup of the land conservation movement remains predominantly white.⁷

The demographics of the nation in the meantime are changing – with populations growing and diversifying rapidly across a range of income levels and geography. Moreover, voices of support for issues of both conservation and environment increasingly come from a diverse range of Americans – in some cases garnering greater support in communities of color than in predominantly white communities.⁸ Similarly, one should not assume that communities of color, or people of color, care more or only about inner city environmental issues. In my experience, the presumption itself is based on a lack of broad

⁶ E.g., demolition of the Richfield Coliseum outside of Cleveland to restore native prairie; clean-up of former rail yards to make way for urban parks in Santa Fe and Los Angeles and elsewhere; even cleanup of former military bases like the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado or Ft. Ord in California to turn over for wildlife habitat and housing.

⁷ The non-land conservation, more pollution based side of the environmental movement is different, with new organizations that are diverse or predominantly run by people of color, women, and young people growing in number. This could be in part due to the lack of diversification in the existing environmental organization infrastructure. It could be because those public health based issues are more compelling to a broader range of activists. There is also a very impressive array of organizations devoted specifically to environmental justice within the environmental movement. In this piece, I am referring more specifically to the field of land conservation. Fortunately, there are new land trusts or conservation advocacy groups or coalitions that are increasingly diverse or devoted to fostering diverse coalitions, and the number is increasing all the time. One example is the Verde Coalition in Los Angeles, a coalition of groups dedicated to meeting the park needs of LA's urban poor. The Center for Whole Communities (<http://www.wholecommunities.org/>) explicitly brings together a diverse range of people and organizations committed to land issues, economic development, and the health of communities.

experience with a diverse set of people, but instead is frequently based on limited experience with a relative few. It is wise in this field, as in life, not to assume too much based on too small a bundle of experience.

At the same time, local and state legislatures are becoming and will become more diverse.⁹ Partners in state and local agencies are also becoming more diverse. The elected officials we work with to generate support for land conservation, along with the voters we rely on to provide funding by initiative, also deal with a diverse group of people and issues every day. They will respond better to partners, like NGOs, that better reflect the concerns and the sensitivities of the broader public.

Similarly, one should not assume that communities of color, or people of color, care more or only about inner city environmental issues. In my experience, the presumption itself is based on a lack of broad experience with a diverse set of people, but instead is frequently based on limited experience with a relative few. It is wise in this field, as in life, not to assume too much based on too small a bundle of experience.

A couple of years ago an important dialogue took place within the movement over whether the environmental movement was losing traction with the American public. That debate, kicked off by the publication of a paper titled the “Death of Environmentalism” by Ted Nordhaus and Michael Schellenberger, centered on whether the environmental movement had begun to talk only to itself rather than connecting with people across the United States.¹⁰ Falling on the heels of the 2004 elections, where there was much written and discussed about the importance of “values” to voters, a critique was made that the movement was no longer connecting to values that real people cared about. Instead, the language was more cerebral, expert, and

⁸ To take just one example, exit polls in Proposition 40, a successful \$2.6 billion water and parks bond in California, showed greater support for the measure from Latinos and African-Americans than white voters. Los Angeles Times exit poll 3/7/2002. See also, “Building Relationships with Communities of Color,” Report for the Western States Diversity Project, prepared by Pyramid Communications for The Nature Conservancy, February 2005: 36-37.

⁹ See e.g., Baldassare, Mark, “Room to Grow? Demographic Changes May Foretell Struggle for Political Power,” San Jose Mercury News, April 1, 2001. See also “Building Relationships...” above, footnote 8: 8-9, 29-50.

geared toward the battles that were going on in legislatures, courts, and the regulatory arena. This is the kind of thing that can happen more easily in homogenous cultures, where a common language reinforces a single way of thinking or perceiving the world.”

While within the “conservation” movement there are some who think it very different from the “environmental” movement (the latter more often characterized as about advocacy, legislation, and litigation, or about pollution and struggle between the public and the private sector), we also are vulnerable to the charge of being disconnected from the realities of people’s lives. The more diverse our makeup, and the more we put in efforts to stay conscious of a variety of points of view and approaches, the less likely we are to be talking to ourselves in our own technical language or to miss opportunities to engage with a broader set of partners in improving our communities.

Another way the movement may be missing what is right in front of us may come from the fact that much of the current movement was created by “baby boomers.” In *Generations at Work*, authors Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak outline the basic differences between the successive generations of WWII Veteran, Baby Boom, Generation X, and Nexters (also called “Millennials” by other authors). In some ways, generational diversity and awareness may be an answer to some of the challenges of the existing, largely Boomer-led movement. One of the key issues the book points out is that the Boomer generation is so sure of itself and its progressiveness that it doesn’t truly appreciate or even recognize that there are different points of view, attitudes, work styles, interests, and skills in different

¹⁰ <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/01/13/doe-reprint/>. There was a vigorous debate within the environmental community in response to the paper. See Carl Pope, “And Now for Something Completely Different: An In-depth Response to the Death of Environmentalism,” <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/01/13/pope-reprint/>. See also other writings in this dialogue noted in footnote 12. Some could argue that the extraordinary rise in visibility and consciousness this past year on climate issues belies the paper’s critique. Others could argue that what made the difference was humanizing the issue, whether through *March of the Penguins* or through Vice-President Gore’s personal commitment portrayed in *An Inconvenient Truth*. My point here is not to re-engage the debate, but to make the point that we need to connect to real people. We need to do that not just by choosing better words, but by better connecting with the diverse array of people in this country who care about protecting public health, family, and nature. We will be better equipped to do this if we are aware enough to recognize there is more than one way to talk or to be. Diversity training, an ongoing commitment to working on these issues, and a significantly diverse staff provide an antidote to becoming disconnected to the broader public.

¹¹ Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership*, Paulist Press, 1977, 2002 edition: 32. I am particularly fond of one of my colleague’s way of putting this – he says that diversity work is important to keep us from committing “assumicide.”

generations in the workforce. Where Boomers struggle with issues of diversity, Nexters tend to be more multicultural in makeup and approach. They are also more able to see issues that are interconnected between environmental and social justice issues, where preceding generations see or practice them as separate “silos” of issues, organizations, and movements.¹²

So, in addition to all of the other reasons for engaging in diversity work and in diversifying the movement at the organizational level (see below), there is self-preservation to consider. The “Nexter” generation is more multi-cultural AND multi-issue than preceding generations. This is one reason for my strongly held view, expressed previously, that the land conservation community and the environmental community more broadly must develop a more sophisticated view of “diversity” and must act to become more relevant to a multi-generational, multi-racial constituency. If we do not, this next generation will simply have to create their own organizations, which they are doing. Those organizations will become the movement, and the existing movements will become a phase of history.¹³

Fortunately, there are efforts beginning in earnest to address diversity in the land conservation community.¹⁴ Some of these efforts are detailed elsewhere in this volume, and this endeavor itself is a fabulous step. This is good and has potential to assure the conservation movement’s present vibrancy and future success if we all take it seriously and truly follow through.

For those who like to think in bullet points, the following are some good reasons that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) used in developing our diversity initiative.¹⁵

1) Changing Demographics of the Nation

- Population trends in the U.S. are changing dramatically, with increasing diversity of population and age distribution.

¹² The environmental justice movement is a great example of an emerging movement that understands and is dedicated to bringing civil rights and environmental issues together. There are other voices as well that are calling for more of a blending of issues. See e.g., Adam Werbach, “Is Environmentalism Dead?” speech given at Commonwealth Club, December 8, 2004. <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2005/01/13/werbach-reprint/> See also Michel Gelobter et al., “The Soul of Environmentalism,” www.rprogress.org/soul/soul.pdf.

¹³ This also suggests that engaging youth within our organizations and communities is even more important than we might think to our own vitality. At a minimum, it is essential to consider “age” diversity as applying both to older staff and to younger staff and understanding that both have something critically important to add to the mix in an organization because of experience, perspective, etc.

- Helps with engagement and trust from all the communities we serve (that we walk the talk).
- Enhances sophistication, understanding, and respect for the dynamics of an increasingly diverse population.
- Creates greater awareness and insight into how to effectively interact with individuals with differing backgrounds and views within and outside our organizations.
- Helps an organization be better prepared to engage effectively with elected officials at state and local levels of government.
- Honors the expectations of funders as well as our partners that we pay attention to diversity in a serious way.

2) Quality of Life Within the Organization

- Creates a dynamic and more open workplace where everyone feels comfortable being who they are vs. having to play an expected role to “fit in.”

¹⁴ I do not want to minimize the sincere past efforts nor the exciting current efforts going on by my exhortation to do more. My concern is that the efforts need to go beyond “tokenism,” i.e., to not just consider how to bring more of “them” into organizations, but to truly create organizations that are consciously striving to be culturally competent and are willing to put in the work that it takes to get there. This is a big deal – it is more than a numbers game. It is about how we view the world and about shedding assumptions about a lot of things. That said, there are some good efforts going on. The Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) worked for years to place interns, particularly diverse interns, in government agencies. As Jeff Cook writes elsewhere in the volume, it is also engaged in organizing and working with a variety of conservation organizations such as TPL, the Land Trust Alliance, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and the Trustees of Reservations, the nation’s oldest land trust, to encourage diversity within the movement. The Wilderness Society and the National Wildlife Federation have engaged in significant initiatives, as have other national and local land conservation organizations. The Nature Conservancy has also made some important contributions, particularly in outreach to diverse communities. There have been conferences and summits on the issues of diversity in the last few years, including Summit 2005: Diverse Partners for Environmental Progress, 2005 National Summit on Diversity in the Environmental Field (University of Michigan Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative), Diversity and Conservation (Conference, Shepardstown, W.Va held by Conservation Fund and Land Trust Alliance 2007), the Boston Environmental Diversity Collaborative, and more. See also Center for Diversity and the Environment, a website devoted to fostering and facilitating diversity efforts in the environmental community. <http://www.environmentaldiversity.org/aboutus.html>. Efforts abound; the challenge is to make our actions substantial, sophisticated, and effective. Diversity Matters is a relatively new organization devoted to expert and sophisticated approaches to this work. See chapter in this volume by Angela Park, founder of Diversity Matters. <http://www.Diversity-Matters.org>. Iantha Gantt-Wright, a pioneer in this work, also specializes in helping the environmental community on these issues. <http://www.keniangroup.com/>.

¹⁵ It is instructive that in constructing TPL’s diversity initiative (see below), our Diversity Council requested early on that we develop the “business case” for doing this work to be clear that this work was an imperative for the organization vs. a “feel good” or “politically correct” exercise. An initial list similar to this was used in paring down the reasons to a more public, and manageable number. The exercise itself was an important dialogue and affirmation within the organization at the Diversity Council and senior management levels.

- Creates an atmosphere and expectation of open learning from each other.
- Makes for a more dynamic, fun, and fulfilling place to work and grow.
- Empowers staff to create new connections in the community, bringing new inspiration and innovation to TPL and the communities we serve.
- Feel commitment and determination to achieve a more diverse and fair workplace because it is the right thing to do.
- Heightens sensitivity to the issues that concern many groups of people, which helps us be more effective together and in the world.
- Encourages an environment where people feel equipped to handle inappropriate behavior or are comfortable addressing situations with management when needed.

3) **Competitive Advantage**

- TPL is viewed even more strongly as an organization acting upon and valuing the “people” part of our mission; gives us “gravitas.”
- Creates new opportunities for TPL to fulfill its mission.
- Fosters atmosphere of “open-mindedness” and ability to effectively change when opportunities or challenges warrant it.
- Helps in the recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- When managed and fully supported, an inclusive culture of people with varied backgrounds and points of view outperforms and is more creative than a homogenous culture.
- Supports our ability to attract diverse contractors and consultants that can bring new energy to TPL’s work and play a role in bringing fairness and equality in the communities in which we work.
- Responds to funders’ hopes and expectations.

4) Consistent with TPL's Long-Range Strategy

- Which is to be a dynamic force for more land conservation in America across a diverse array of landscapes.

TPL'S EFFORTS – A GLIMPSE AT ONE ORGANIZATION'S CURRENT EFFORTS

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national non-profit land conservation organization devoted to conserving land for people across a range of landscapes from inner-city to wilderness. We work in inner cities with communities to create parks, playgrounds, and community gardens. We work with ranchers, farmers, and people who fish; we work with Native American Tribes to help regain lands that were taken from them over 150 years ago that are important to their economic and cultural health; we work with giant forest concerns and with individuals who want to see a special place preserved for others to enjoy beyond their lifetime. We also work to preserve places of historic or cultural importance to people whether African-American heritage sites, Civil War sites, tribal cultural sites, or even amusement parks or carousels that strike an important chord in people's sense of history and connection to a given special place. We work in concert with communities to decide what to protect or create. We focus on putting land into the public domain for access for people. Our projects rarely have "no trespassing" signs, though we do preserve land for biodiversity, as it is also important to people.¹⁶

Our work is based on the premise that connecting people with land is important to individuals, to our health as a species, and to giving people an incentive to want to save land and support other environmental causes. It is also about what happens between people when on the land, and when they are in the act of protecting or creating public spaces together. It is about the empowerment and inspiration of people as much as it is about the land itself. We are about 450 strong, in over forty locations across the country – some

¹⁶ TPL's current draft vision statement: "TPL is committed to helping protect and expand the magnificent and growing system of public parks, gardens, trails, protected ranches and farms, and remote natural areas that stretches from wilderness to inner city across the whole American landscape. These protected landscapes are critical to our physical, economic, and environmental health, and they provide us all with the places where we can form a deep and meaningful connection with the natural world and with each other. When it comes to our cities, TPL's work will not be complete until every one of us – in particular every child – can walk to a neighborhood park, garden or playground. We recognize that a healthy landscape is indispensable, not only for human health, happiness and inspiration, but for the survival of our fellow species in the web of life."

large, and some with a single person. We are very diverse compared to many other environmental/conservation groups. However, we are not nearly diverse enough to reflect the communities we serve, nor diverse enough to take full advantage of the opportunity to create an even better organization to work in.

Like many organizations, TPL has had prior efforts at “diversity work,” including creating a Diversity Committee in the past that made many recommendations, some of which were adopted and implemented. To the disappointment of many who had served on the Committee, other recommendations were not implemented, due in part to the press of business and lack of ongoing infrastructure. In late 2004, we embarked on a new initiative, one that we hope will yield a myriad of benefits for all TPLers. Instead of trying to do it ourselves, we engaged expert help to ensure that we would construct an initiative with help from those who had experience in the field rather than relying solely on the good intentions of those within the organization.¹⁷ We determined that we should start by conducting a focused assessment of our staff’s views on diversity issues within the organization. The initiative that followed was designed around and started with the issues that were most important to staff within the organization.

We were pleased to find strong staff support for doing an initiative – both from people typically considered “diverse” and those considered “mainstream.” In the assessment, we found that we had a strong culture, with people frequently staying at TPL for many years – or leaving and then coming back. The downside was that people were hesitant to point out challenges of communication or bias, for fear of being seen as a “whiner.” Many staff noted that they loved the people and work of TPL, but that we could and should be more enlightened and conscious of the perception (or reality) of a strong organizational culture that made assumptions about what personality types, etc. were better at doing our work than was actually the case.¹⁸ We also heard from the mainstream staff that they did not want to be unconsciously excluding others and wanted training. We shared the assessment with all employees and Board Members, and we currently

¹⁷ lantha Gantt-Wright of the Kenian Group and colleagues. We have also worked with other consultants in the field to help us locally and for specialized training, e.g., Angela Park of Diversity Matters (and author in this volume) and Amber Mayes of Amber Mayes Consulting. In the course of the initiative, we expect to rely on even more expert help to keep us on track and to assure a more sophisticated approach to the work. In addition to thanking lantha Gantt-Wright for her leadership and passion for this work with us and with the broader community, I’d like to thank Barbara Smith, Carrie Speckart and the TPL Diversity Council for their countless hours and heartfelt commitment to this work.

share it with all new hires and new Board Members, along with a briefing on our Diversity Initiative's goals, accomplishments and work plans.

We also determined that we wanted to devise an initiative that wouldn't look for instant results on numbers. We had seen other organizations move forward with diversity recruiting initiatives that tried to bring in "diverse" employees without working on the existing staff's attitudes about or skills in dealing with diversity, and we wanted to do better. We didn't want token efforts, we wanted successful efforts and long-term success that would lead both to increasing the diversity of our staff and to creating a more engaged and adept culture. And we decided to include the whole organization in our efforts vs. putting "diversity" into a small pocket of individuals working off on their own.

We didn't want token efforts, we wanted successful efforts and long-term success that would lead both to increasing the diversity of our staff and to creating a more engaged and adept culture. And we decided to include the whole organization in our efforts vs. putting "diversity" into a small pocket of individuals working off on their own.

So we focused on building a dynamic initiative, driven by a Diversity Council ("Council") that was drawn from diverse backgrounds, geographies, rank, and function within the organization. Senior managers are part of the Council alongside junior staff. Our yearly work plan and priorities are developed by the Council. Much of the work is done by the Council and monitored by it as well.

Our basic goal is not to simply change our "numbers," but to create a learning atmosphere in which developing "cultural competency" is the number one goal.¹⁹ At the same time, we also want to increase our diversity. We know we ultimately need both in order to be successful by any measure. To recruit successfully, we need to be a place truly

¹⁸ While we conduct exit interviews with all staff who leave TPL, we had not found through our formal interviews that race or other diversity was an acknowledged factor in a staff member's decision to leave. However, informal conversations outside the formal system indicated that some employees were leaving in some part to go to organizations that were more diverse, or because they were in part weary of having to always adjust to the prevailing culture, or to be the sole voice of diversity in a given setting. See discussion and bullets above re: working in a more diverse organization.

committed to a mindset about diversity rather than a numbers game (or tokenism). We want to be a place that people are drawn to versus one that people need be lured to. To successfully develop an organization that celebrates diversity, we need to have a critical mass of diverse staff within the organization so it is not just an intellectual pursuit. The two work hand in hand and will evolve together over time.

We started with an initial focus on mandatory baseline training across the organization. The training uses teaching, exercises, and discussion to get across the basic concepts of bias, and the “lenses” through which we see the world. Only by getting the basic concepts and language of diversity into a common understanding would we be able to evolve into more sophisticated trainings, discussions, and learning. We also decided to define “diversity” broadly to include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, age, etc., with an acknowledgment that race requires a special emphasis. Our goal is to be inclusive and to build a consciousness and a constituency for recognizing and embracing diversity. We are also hoping that by starting to work on whatever element of diversity resonates with individuals in a given geography, we can open a more constructive conversation on other elements. In some areas, gender resonates, in others, religion or politics, in others, race.²⁰

As noted above, one of the first requests of Council members was that we develop the “business case” for diversity so that was clear to the organization that this effort was not a feel good, “politically correct” addition to the usual course of business, but that it was integral and strategically essential to our business. Elements of the current statement of the case include:

- **Changing demographics of the U.S.:** The workforce is increasingly diverse, as are our clients in communities and the public officials with whom we work. We need to be relevant in the world we work in and competent to navigate and lead in it.
- **Quality of life at TPL:** A diverse workplace, with an awareness and commitment to cultural competence, is a more dynamic,

¹⁹ “Cultural competency” refers to the ability to recognize differences and work competently and respectfully across differences. The concept recognizes that this takes training, effort, and commitment.

²⁰ “Class” or “privilege” is also an issue that emerged from our assessment and has followed through in our work. It is a more difficult aspect of “diversity” to choose council members on, but it is an important part of our ongoing dialogue. For an interesting discussion of the issue of class in America, see <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/national/class/index.html>. Also see *Class Notes: Thoughts on Diversity in the Classroom and in Environmentalism's Past* by Matthew Klinge in this volume.

engaging, and effective place in which to work and grow. We want to have a culture that encourages people to stay and grow with us over the long term. Retention over the long run benefits the mission through maintaining experience.

- **Competitive edge:** To be able to recruit the most qualified staff requires an atmosphere of dynamism, tolerance, and engagement, particularly with younger recruits. Results of private sector research indicate that the companies that have done the most to foster and manage diversity are also the most successful companies overall in financial and other terms.²¹
- **Consistency with TPL long term strategy:** We are the “land for people,” “go to” organization. We need to be cutting edge on the “people” front, inside the organization and outside.

The initiative, currently in its second full year, has three main components, which are managed by “goal teams”: Education & Training, Management Systems (including recruiting and retention), and Research & Measurement. Our initial timeframe, based upon advice from a variety of experts in the field, is three to five years to institutionalize our diversity efforts into our ongoing work even at a basic level, recognizing that diversity work is something that needs to be constant and over the long run, rather than a quick initiative to “fix” a problem.

EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

Education and Training

- All TPL staff have taken a full day of “baseline training” to understand the broad nature of diversity. Training includes examination of demographic shifts in America, experiential exercises to understand one’s own possible “lenses” or bias, and discussion on how to avoid having those biases unconsciously affect our reactions and openness to differences between people. That training is also now integrated into all of our New Hire Orientations.
- We are on our second round of mandatory training across the organization. This focuses on the importance of diversity work to TPL’s mission success, TPL’s own training on

²¹ Diversity Inc., *The Business Case for Diversity*, 5th ed. 2006.

recruiting and hiring in a bias-free manner, how to step up and constructively give feedback to individuals when they say something hurtful or inappropriate to you or another colleague, along with examples of case studies on behaviors, good and bad, that are based on TPL real experiences.

- A diversity portal has been added to our intranet site. It has materials on the initiative and will also become an important repository and access site for further readings and educational materials for self-study.
- We will be kicking off our Diversity Advocates program this year. This will involve more TPLers in hosting and attending brown bag sessions on a variety of specific topics of learning on diversity.

Management Systems

- To identify best recruiting practices, members of the Diversity Council conducted interviews of past and present TPLers, particularly those of color, to determine how they came to TPL and their experience with the recruitment process.
- Similarly, Council members later considered a retention survey and suggested doing an employee satisfaction survey, done by an outside vendor with ability to benchmark TPL with other organizations. The study will include all employees, with some elements specifically related to diversity. That study will be done in the upcoming fiscal year.
- We have implemented training for all hiring supervisors on how to conduct bias-free interviewing and have covered our most senior staff. The rollout to all supervisors continues.
- We have implemented a policy that requires all recruiting for hires above a certain grade level to conduct and certify outreach for diverse candidates. No hire is allowed until outreach efforts have been discussed with and reviewed by senior staff in our national office. Implementation will be evaluated in performance reviews beginning this year.
- Establishment of diversity friendly policies, including telecommuting, job-sharing, and extended leave. A compressed workweek is currently under review.

- We have had diversity intern programs, and are planning a new and more formalized program.
- We have a diversity incentive program that was implemented following the preceding initiative. The Diversity Associates program gives a short-term national subsidy that makes it possible to hire diverse candidates when there may not otherwise be adequate budget to fill a given position in a department.

Research and Measurement

- Early on, the group decided that whatever we did, it had to be more than just exhortations and words. TPL is a results-oriented organization. Its people are results-oriented. So we set about developing a “scorecard” where we would monitor our efforts both to keep us moving forward, and as a learning opportunity.
- Why a scorecard? The team believes that it will provide a strategic management tool that will help link our strategic thinking with the operation of the organization, capture both qualitative and quantitative data, allow us to better define and accept issues, help us recognize opportunities and challenges, and keep us honest in our efforts to make continuous progress as people and as an organization.
- The scorecard will be developed and implemented this fiscal year.
- Elements of the scorecard under consideration include:
 - o Equal Employment Opportunity category data on staff demographics, turnover/retention/promotion statistics by demographic group.
 - o Policies and procedures.
 - o Investments at the national and regional level.
 - o External efforts at community outreach, recruitment outreach, marketing efforts.
 - o Learning efforts: e.g., number of managers and employees trained.
- The scorecard will be evaluated, reviewed, and recognized, with rewards and realignment taking place on an ongoing basis.

- In addition, the diversity scorecard will be integrated into the overall strategic scorecard of TPL in the coming year.
- Diversity is an element of the organization's overall Long-range Strategic Plan, and will be evaluated annually as part of the plan's evaluation.

We are a work in progress and in process, but committed at the highest levels and across the organization to becoming an organization worthy of support and engagement across the diverse communities of America and to future generations. We know that it will require humility and hard work, as well as a commitment to engaging in this work constantly for many years. We also know that we are beginners and need to approach our work with an individual and collective commitment to constant learning, vigilance, and thoughtful action.

CONCLUSION

Working in diverse environments, where diversity is something valued and worked on, is a fabulous setting to grow as a person and as a contributor to the greater world. The more diverse we are, the stronger we are – if we work at it. The more competent we are to acknowledge and value differences, and understand our own biases, the smarter we will be as individuals and as organizations. Those differences encompass race, gender, sexual orientation, age (or era), physical ability, religion, even politics and personality. Some are visible, some are not.

There are promising signs within the conservation movement, but it is our obligation to increase the velocity and depth of this work if we are to retain our relevance and increase our impact. Our obligation and opportunity is to take “diversity” from talk and aspiration to long-term sustained action. That action is about learning and attitude as well as our “numbers.” Doing so will lead to a more dynamic, effective, and lasting movement. It will require hard work and a sincere effort but the rewards are priceless. Making a point of valuing people for who they are and for what they bring to our organizations creates more appealing organizations to work in, thereby enhancing our abilities to bring in and retain great staff. And, it can create organizations that are more nimble, resilient, responsive, and dynamic in a world that needs us to be as effective as we can be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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appointed her to the City's Board of Public Works, responsible for the wastewater system, solid waste management system, street maintenance, water reclamation, and other essential city services. As President of the Board, she emphasized not only environmental protection and advanced waste reduction and recycling, but also effective MBE/WBE contracting, "siting equity" in siting city waste management facilities, and opening up government processes to the public. Later, while Regional Administrator of the EPA's Pacific Southwest Region during the Clinton Administration, she emphasized community engagement, environmental justice, and working with sovereign Indian Nations while also dealing with traditional issues of air, water, and waste regulatory issues. In both city and federal management roles, she prioritized diversity efforts as well as recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse staff. She currently serves as the Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer of The Trust for Public Land.

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Class Notes: Thoughts on Diversity in the Classroom and in Environmentalism's Past¹

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SUMMARY

Diversity remains an ongoing experiment for environmental organizations, but efforts to achieve diversity often begin much earlier, in the college classroom. Here, too, prospective environmental professionals tend to be overwhelmingly white and affluent. This essay analyzes the connections between diversity and higher education in North America with a focus on the history of environmentalism and its antecedents. Interweaving personal experience with historical analysis, the essay concludes that creating and sustaining diverse communities of students and faculty is not enough. Educators instead need to teach how environmental problems are insoluble absent diverse disciplinary approaches, from the sciences to the arts and humanities.

KEY WORDS

Environmentalism, conservation, diversity, race, class, college, university, history, teaching, interdisciplinary, environmental studies, higher education

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It is when the silence grows uncomfortable that the learning begins.

I clear my throat and ask the question again. "So, do we save jobs or save the forest? How do we choose?"

I'm in my classroom at Bowdoin College, a small, elite liberal arts school (according to the guidebooks) facing over two dozen students sitting in a circle. They face an empty space in the middle. The question lurking in our midst is a common one for environmentalists and their opponents alike: how to protect nature without compromising human needs. While we are reading about the fate of old-growth forests in the Pacific Northwest for my introductory course in North American environmental history, the topic also applies to Maine. In the late 1980s, as timber companies battled environmentalists over how best to balance logging in the national forests with protecting threatened species, like the Northern spotted owl, small towns in rural Washington, Oregon, and California saw their economies wither and die. Maine now faces a similar crisis. In the past two decades, thousands have lost their jobs here as paper companies have terminated their operations and moved to Canada, eastern Russia, or the American Southeast. This is a question that haunts environmentalists in other places, too, from the rusting automotive factories in Detroit to the empty fishing docks of Gloucester, Massachusetts, to the silent sawmills of Coos Bay, Oregon.

"What's the choice?" The first respondent is Phoebe, an idealistic sophomore who grew up in suburban Chicago, her long brown hair pulled back into a ponytail that cascades down her back. She is usually the class lightning rod, but she sounds hesitant today. "I mean, come on, once you lose the forest, you lose it forever, right?" Several of Phoebe's peers nod in silent assent. She takes a sip of water from a Nalgene water bottle festooned with stickers. I notice the one facing me: "*Every day is Earth Day!*"

"Does everyone agree with Phoebe?" I hope that someone will bite, but the majority of the students are trying to stare a hole through the floor hoping to avoid the question.

It is an early spring afternoon in Maine; the skeletal trees, devoid of leaves, hold up the leaden sky that threatens to dump snow, even in mid-April. Despite the dismal landscape, the ice is thawing and the days are lengthening. Spring is stalking the campus. I know because it is getting harder to keep the students' attention. Unfortunately, it may be a permanent winter for some of Maine's mill workers and lumbermen.

I have students who come from rural Maine. They have surnames like Pelletier, Boudreau, MacDonald, and Theberge – names that stand like blazes in the forests that blanket thousands of acres in this state. I imagine generations of French-Canadian and Scots-Irish mill workers and loggers, clad in mackinaws and hobnailed boots, slipping saws into the white pines or pressing pulp into paper beneath heavy steel rollers that can crush arms like twigs. Their grandsons and granddaughters, sons and daughters, are now in college and I'm asking them to justify their patrimony. To be the descendant of a logger in an environmental studies class is like being an Exxon-Mobil executive at a Green Party convention. The two don't mix.

There's something else at stake here. Like schools around the country, Bowdoin takes great pains to embrace racial and geographic diversity. The college actively recruits students of color – not an easy task for a small college in Maine – and takes great pride in steering them toward matriculation and graduation. It also has a longstanding tradition of bringing first-generation college students from the rural reaches of this poor state, from Fort Kent and Houlton in Aroostook County, or Machias and Calais in Washington County.

Class, however, is a trickier subject. Whether a student is from Westchester County, New York, or inner city Baltimore, everyone claims to be middle class. Everyone wants to pass as middle class, no better and no worse than their peers, and it is easy to do so for a while because class does not always manifest itself in the color of one's skin or the spelling of one's name.

The cues are subtle. Listen to where students spend their holidays and weekends, or if they have a job on campus. The gulf between the students who vacation in Bermuda and the students who remain on campus over spring break to work in the library or dining hall can be as wide as the racial and ethnic divides that occupy so much of our attention here and on other campuses.

I'm witnessing just such a rift in my classroom and I don't know how to bridge it.

THE UNBEARABLE WHITENESS OF BEING GREEN

It is a rift all too familiar to many Americans and a gulf that college faculty have, until recently, tended to ignore or even unintentionally widen. American higher education is a far more diverse place today

than it was before the civil rights movement due to access to financial aid for all and the adoption of need blind admissions at the nation's more privileged schools. Public and private institutions, from big research universities like Harvard and Berkeley to small liberal arts colleges like Bowdoin and Reed, now actively recruit prospective students who bear little resemblance to the powerful men that originally endowed such places. In the face of the recent rollback of affirmative action in several states, administrators and trustees continue to push for still more diversity.

Despite such efforts the faces *in front* of the classroom remain overwhelmingly the same. According to the U.S. Department of Education, as of fall 2003, nearly 85 percent of all tenured instructors at the nation's colleges and universities were white.² Evaluating class is far more complex and even less precise. Finding data for interdisciplinary fields as diverse as environmental studies or environmental science, which embrace disciplines from all corners of campus, is virtually impossible. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that both students and faculty in such programs are mostly white and often relatively well off.

In our environmental studies program at Bowdoin, of the twenty-five instructors who regularly teach classes, women comprise approximately one third of the total and only two are faculty of color. The numbers are similar for our students. We have graduated almost 180 majors over the past five years, yet only 6 percent of those graduates were students of color — a small number, given that approximately 25 percent of Bowdoin's 1,734 students are students of color. Moreover, we have little or no information on our students' socioeconomic backgrounds beyond the subjective comments we overhear in class because Bowdoin, like so many schools of its caliber, is need blind in its admissions.³

The lack of diversity that I see in my classroom should come as no surprise for anyone who works in the environmental field, particularly the non-profit and advocacy groups that dominate the landscape. A 2002 report by Robert Stanton found that people of color comprised only 11 percent of the staff and 9 percent of the board members for

² T. D. Snyder, A.G. Tan, and C. M. Hoffman, *Digest of Education Statistics 2005* (NCES 2006-003) U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing, 2005): 392. Bowdoin fits this trend: as of the 2005-06 academic year, 8.9% of regular faculty — those on the tenure track or permanent visiting status — were African American, Asian American or Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latino.

natural resource organizations. Mainstream environmental groups have aggressively expanded their programming for and recruitment of diverse staff and board members in recent years, mirroring the efforts in higher education to put progressive political rhetoric relating to the need for diversity into action. Yet some activists and scholars remain skeptical and cite history as the reason why. As the authors of a recent report *The Soul of Environmentalism* stated, “modern environmentalism” was “the Elvis of 60s activism,” riding shamelessly on the coattails of the civil rights movement.⁴

That may be putting it too bluntly, but the critics of mainstream environmentalism have a point. Until recently, it has largely been the prerogative of the affluent and white.

And it is a point that does not sit well with my students.

“Why should loggers make the sacrifices?” Heads turn to face Mary, who grew up near Millinocket, a Maine timber town at the edge of the North Woods in the shadow of Mount Katahdin, whose family runs a rustic resort for tourists during the summer. She pulls the vowels through her words, lingering over them, and drops her r’s softly as she speaks. “I don’t want to chop down all the trees, but who uses paper? Who uses lumber? Why don’t other people make sacrifices?”

“But logging destroys nature,” counters Phoebe. “No trees, no forest.” “Those trees put food on my neighbors’ tables,” replies Mary. “Those trees help to send kids to college.” She sits, arms crossed, shoulders hunched beneath her wool sweater, as if she is protecting herself from an expected blow. “We want the tourists to come to our camp, sure, but we also know a lot of people who go on welfare whenever the mills shut down. Not everyone can afford to keep the forest as a playground.”

Phoebe has had it. “What? I don’t see nature as a playground!” She fiddles with a carabiner attached to her water bottle, snapping the gate open and closed, open and closed. “I mean, how can a logger have any reverence for a forest anyway?”

³ These statistics are subjective since many students today identify themselves in multiple categories, and those of mixed heritage often forego categorizing themselves by standard U.S. Census and admissions groups. Thanks to Eileen Johnson, the Environmental Studies Program manager at Bowdoin, who helped me to collect and analyze numbers.

⁴ Michel Gelobter et al., *The Soul of Environmentalism: Rediscovering Transformational Politics in the 21st Century* (August 2004): 10. Copy at <http://www.rprogress.org/soul/> (accessed February 10, 2007). The report was in response to Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, *The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World* (August 2004), copy at <http://www.thebreakthrough.org/> (accessed February 10, 2007).

Mary unfolds her arms and leans forward. “My brothers and father love the woods. We camp, we fish, and we hike. A lot of the loggers I know do the same. Just ‘cause they cut down trees doesn’t mean that they don’t like nature.”

“Wait a minute,” I say, “are we still talking about protecting nature or are we talking about something else?” I’m trying to steer the debate into a learning opportunity, but the students seem resistant. This is good. Sometimes my Bowdoin students are too polite, too willing to color within the lines, so I like it when they argue.

The question hangs over the class, uncomfortably. Feet shuffle and fingers fiddle with pens, notebook pages, baseball hats and hair. Eyes turn downward. No one is looking at me. I hear the clock ticking, loudly.

These are the moments that teachers dread.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE PAST

Historians are professional gadflies. We are in the business of asking people to think about things from uncomfortable positions by thinking historically. It is hard work. Thinking historically requires seeing the past as a different place, of seeing past and present as the result of complex causes and effects unfolding through time. It does not come naturally to most Americans, who have little use for history beyond anniversaries, nostalgia, or stories to confirm their own biases. It is not easy for earnest college students who see themselves as perpetually in the making. Further, it is exceptionally difficult for my environmental studies students, so earnest and optimistic. As a historian, I face the tricky task of deflating their certitude without killing their idealism. I’ve spent the better part of a semester trying to get my class to think past the stereotype that only certain people care about nature.

This debate over logging may seem irrelevant to most of my students, but it speaks to ways in which the not-so-distant past shapes environmental politics in the present and will continue to do so in the future. Battles over power and inequality are the root of it all.

The relationship between inequality and environmentalism is a vexing one. It inheres in some of our nation’s most troublesome conflicts: efficiency versus equity, individual liberty versus the common

good, abundance versus scarcity. Environmentalists have passionately defended things endangered or in short supply, but they have rarely considered the hard truths about who benefits from saving wilderness, eliminating pollution, or halting logging and fishing. When we put a human face on the environment, the choices seem less obvious. All too often, that historical face has been poor and dispossessed.⁵

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The conflict has deep roots that historians have unearthed over the past several decades. As early as the seventeenth century, people began to confront nature's limits. Centuries of development had turned a seeming Eden into a wasteland of stumps and gullies. Immigration, the forced importation of African slave labor, natural reproduction, and a burgeoning market economy that knitted North America to Europe, Asia, and Africa had transformed the continent's flora, fauna, and landscapes into commodities with astonishing rapidity. The pace of change caught many by surprise. "Nor could it be imagined," the English colonial historian Edward Johnson wrote in 1653, "that this Wilderness should turn a mart for Merchants in so short a space."⁶

By the time the continent came of age, the Jeffersonian ideal of the yeoman farmer, feet planted firmly in the soil of his own virtuous labor, was vanishing with the forests and fields that had sustained the myth. By 1864, George Perkins Marsh, a Vermonter who had visited the denuded farmlands of Italy, warned, "We are, even now, breaking up the floor and wainscoting and doors and window frames of our dwelling." Marsh urged immediate action if the New World was to avoid the ruin of the Old.⁷

⁵ One important article that raised such questions in a public forum was William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995, 1996): 69-90. The essay originally appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* (August 13, 1995).

Why did they fight so hard to conserve and preserve? The answers offered by historians lead us into a neglected past that few environmentalists know or want to admit. Sportsmen, including some of the continent's most powerful individuals, were among the first conservationists to seek protections for what we now call environmental amenities.

The ensuing story is familiar. By the close of the 19th century, concerned citizens stood up to stop the slaughter of the bison, stay the lumberman's axe, and set aside scenic places with the help of that greatest of American inventions, the national park. Yet who were the people behind the original conservation and preservation movements? They were the upper crust or aspirants to high status, the new middle class.

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The Boone and Crockett Club, for example, founded in 1887 by Theodore Roosevelt, dedicated itself to protecting game animals and their habitat in part by taking aim at the rural poor. Roosevelt championed the "fair chase" principle of hunting game with minimal equipment and an eye on the sporting experience. His generosity toward prey did not extend to people whom he and other high-class hunters deemed unsporting. Poor whites and blacks in the southern United States shot egrets for plumes coveted by milliners and hat-loving women. Italian immigrants strangled songbirds for food.

⁶ Quotation from Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983, 2003): 167. For the environmental history of other regions, see Mart A. Stewart, *"What Nature Suffers to Groe": Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); and Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside: Indians, Colonists, and Slaves in South Atlantic Forests, 1500-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁷ George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature*, ed. David Lowenthal (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965): 52. For more on Marsh's ideas, see Marcus Hall, *Earth Repair: A Transatlantic History of Environmental Restoration* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2005).

Native peoples caught walleye and salmon with spears and nets. William Temple Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological Garden, called these marginal people the “regular army of destruction,” while sportsmen like him had the money and political connections to persuade state and provincial legislatures to do their bidding.⁸

Powerful men like Hornaday and Roosevelt were joined by well-heeled women, members of elite social clubs and local Audubon Society chapters, who rallied against the millinery trade in bird feathers. They mocked the poorer women who wore such fashions as the mark of distinction. It was thinly-disguised class warfare and the battles consumed men and women together.

In its original guise, conservation amounted to regulating hunting and fishing in ways that restricted poor people’s access to nature. States mandated the purchase of licenses, prohibited gear favored by people who depended on fish and game for subsistence, and restricted the spaces and times of harvest. Some measures did protect wildlife, but their intention and effect was also to reserve the best of nature for the best of people.⁹

Setting aside wildlife for the worthy to consume was only one tactic that discriminated against marginalized groups. Preserving scenic places was another. The new national parks had a simple premise at their core: wilderness was a place apart from humans. Writing in 1894, John Muir described the Miwok and Piute Indians of the Yosemite as “mostly ugly, and some of them all together hideous.” Their very presence disturbed his quest for “solemn calm” in the wilderness. They “seemed to have no right place in the landscape.” This view was widely shared among preservationists, who turned out native peoples from the very places that gave them identity. Beginning with Yellowstone in

⁸ William Temple Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1913): 53. For the history of conservation and discrimination, see Louis Warren, *The Hunter’s Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); Bill Parenteau, “Care, Control and Supervision: Native People in the Canadian Atlantic Salmon Fishery, 1867-1900,” *Canadian Historical Review* 79 (March 1998): 1-35; Joseph E. Taylor III, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999); and Douglas C. Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). For an interesting corrective on the elite origins of conservation policy, see Richard William Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁹ Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999): 57-110.

1872, officials often expelled Indians at gunpoint and in violation of treaty obligations to uphold the wilderness ideal. Similar skirmishes were commonplace in the founding of Adirondack State Park in New York, Glacier National Park in Montana, and in other protected spaces across the continent.¹⁰

The fixation on wilderness and wildlife also had a perverse impact on the urban poor, who like their rural counterparts, became victims of conservationists' intentions. Frederick Law Olmsted, the mastermind of the modern urban park, believed that beautiful landscapes could yield responsible citizens. He viewed cities as engines of inequality, and like other reformers, he looked askance at the masses crowded into tenements and worried what effect living in such squalor would have upon American urban life. His most famous creation, New York's Central Park, was designed to ameliorate the animosities of class and nationality through the healing properties of grassy lawns, shady trees, and open spaces. Olmsted's ideas worked too well. His parks became real-estate magnets, driving up land values and compelling local residents to push for restrictions against uncouth workmen and strangely clothed foreigners. Urban parks were inexorably cut off from the people Olmsted most wanted to reach, by "Keep off the Grass" signs and vagrancy laws. Some of these edicts are still enforced to combat homelessness today."

The intersecting boundaries of race and class did more than exclude the poor and minorities from amenities. They also inspired the modern zoning laws and technological systems that made cities more habitable by driving noxious industries such as tanneries, slaughterhouses, fish canneries, and foundries to the physical and social margins. Modern sewers saved countless lives by vanquishing the sources of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid, yet waste, including smelly and noisy businesses, had to go somewhere. All too often that meant poor and minority neighborhoods. Back of the Yards in Chicago, Barrio Logan in San Diego, the Duwamish

¹⁰ John Muir, *The Mountains of California* (New York: The Century Company, 1894, 1911): 92-93. For parks and expulsion, see Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹¹ Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992):58-91, 291-97; Terence G. Young, *Building San Francisco's Parks, 1850-1930* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): 33-34, 59-60, 107-11.

Waterway in Seattle, and Newtown Creek in Brooklyn became sites where industry and poverty merged to create unholy toxic messes.¹²

Well before the mid-20th century, the color line was also the green line separating those who enjoyed clean water, beautiful parks, and fresh air from those who did not. Poor lands had become the natural home for poor people. The root biases of conservationist and preservationist politics remain central to the modern movement we call environmentalism.

As a distinct cultural and political phenomenon, environmentalism did not emerge until the Cold War, when North Americans living in the shadow of atomic warfare and facing rising levels of traffic and pollution began to fear the loss of the continent's remaining open spaces. By the first Earth Day in April 1970, mainstream environmentalism found its full-throated voice and persuaded even President Richard Nixon, eager to snatch suburban voters from the Democrats, to support the Endangered Species Act and the Environmental Protection Agency. It helped that the mainstream media had pushed the environment onto the stage through made-for-television crises such as Cleveland's burning Cuyahoga River and flocks of oil-smeared birds along Santa Barbara beaches.¹³

Once again, it was mostly white, middle class Americans who aligned with the movement. Only rarely did issues transcend racial and class lines. César Chávez's famous produce boycotts, launched to protect Chicano farm workers from pesticide exposure and unsanitary conditions, was the exception that proved the rule. More typical was environmentalists' flat-footed response to the furor over Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*. Ehrlich, a Stanford biologist, was repelled by the "hellish aspect" of slums during a visit in Delhi, India, and later proposed limits on population, including sterilization of all males with families of three or more children in the so-called Third World.

¹² The literature on urban environmental history is a burgeoning one. Three key works among many include: Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Race, Class, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); and Harold Platt, *Shock Cities: The Environmental Transformation and Reform of Manchester and Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹³ An excellent overview of American postwar environmentalism is Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Another superb survey, with added attention to race, class, and gender, is Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2005).

Against the backdrop of the civil rights and Black Power movement, Ehrlich's arguments read like a modern-day version of the eugenics and scientific racism supported by earlier conservationists such as Roosevelt and Hornaday (and later by writer Edward Abbey and ecologist Garrett Hardin). Although some environmentalists tried to defuse Ehrlich's rhetorical bomb by pointing to over-consumption in the developed world, David Brower and others fanned the fires by celebrating Ehrlich as a brave man who spoke unpleasant truths.¹⁴

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Thus environmentalism's own troubled history contributed to the fractured political landscape we see today. In cities and among communities of color during the 1970s and 1980s, another movement emerged. While the mainstream nonprofits and political groups focused on wilderness and endangered species, environmental justice activists concentrated on largely urban and industrial problems such as pollution, heavy metals, toxics, unsafe food and water, illegal waste disposal, and dangerous working conditions. Meanwhile, rural residents in the western United States built a funhouse mirror version of environmental justice. Fed up with environmentalists and government agencies, the Wise Use movement turned green rhetoric inside out, claiming that local farmers, ranchers, loggers, fishers, and miners knew best how to care for the land because they had worked it longest. When environmentalists dismissed Wise Users as dupes of corporate interests, they once again bared their ignorance of the countryside's pent-up resentment toward meddling urbanites and weekend warriors.¹⁵

¹⁴ Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York and San Francisco: Ballantine Books and the Sierra Club, 1968): 15.

Ultimately, what I try to teach my students is that North Americans of all backgrounds have lived with nature in mind even if their beliefs and actions may seem repellent. My job is to critique the icons of environmentalism – John Muir and Marjory Stoneman Douglas, David McTaggart and Paul Watson, David Brower and Rachel Carson – and add some new names to the canon – Alice Hamilton, crusader against lead poisoning and pioneer in occupational health, or Lois Gibbs, the housewife-turned-activist who fought to save Love Canal. I call this good teaching and sound scholarship, but there is a political aim at work here as well. So long as the mainstream stories of the powerful and affluent remain foremost in my students' minds, they will be the stories my students may take as the truth. It is a history in need of revision.

I restate my question: "OK, are we still talking about protecting nature or are we talking about something else?" The students are dodging my interrogation. I glance at the clock. It reads ten to four. Five minutes left. I feel the learning moment slipping away and the students leaving angry and confused. This is not a good way to conclude.

"So what is at the root of this debate? What's at stake?"

Mary crosses her arms again and answers bluntly: "Those who can afford to lock up the forest and those who can't afford to, I guess."

I see an opening and plunge in. "So are environmental issues, then, about more than protecting wilderness or saving biodiversity? Not that those aren't important, but are they the only things on the table?"

Phoebe looks down, fiddles with her water bottle, and looks at Mary. "It's easy for someone like me to criticize logging. I've never really thought about where my paper or wood comes from." She fiddles with her water bottle again. "Or who makes these things. I know it's a total cliché, but there's no such thing as a free lunch, maybe."

I look at the clock. Five to four. That will have to be the closing comment for today. I remind the students to push the desks back into rows and collect their trash, a small gesture to the College's busy housekeeping staff. A few drift forward to make appointments to discuss their upcoming papers, and then I'm left alone, done for the

¹⁵ For one take on the politics that gave rise to the "Wise Use" movement, a topic that requires further historical study, see Karen R. Merrill, *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, Government, and the Property Between Them* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). The literature on environmental justice is broad and extensive. One good overview of the movement's origins is Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground*: 298-320.

day. I cross the quadrangle, still covered with snow and ice, throw my backpack in the front seat of the car, crank the engine, and point the hood towards home. I take a right turn out of campus, out of Brunswick, and into the Maine of stereotype and ridicule.

It is a drive that I do several days a week, leaving behind the quaint Federal-style homes and shiny new subdivisions filled with split-levels and ranches for the tumbledown chaos of saltboxes, doublewides, and mobile homes that vie for space alongside the occasional Cape Cods. A rusted pickup with one broken mud flap bounces on the pothole-filled road in front of me. A sticker on the bumper states the driver's political allegiance: "Restore Boston! Leave the North Woods for Jobs!" This is when I know I'm no longer in seemingly progressive Brunswick, with its Volvos and Saabs and Subarus plastered with any number of progressive political statements. Well, I think, so much for keeping my work and home life separate.

As I take the left onto the road to my house twelve miles and twenty minutes from campus, lobster traps and boats on blocks become commonplace, along with the two or three bombed-out cars parked in front of every third house or so, dusted with snow and tinged with rust. Even here, the landscape is more complex than one of simple poverty. Among the dilapidated residences, there are the large vacation homes, built by newcomers, complete with two-car garages and manicured front yards. There are foreign cars and liberal bumper stickers. If you take houses and automobiles as your measure, the class divides in Harpswell, the small coastal town where I live, seem even wider than on campus. Chevy and Ford half-ton trucks fill the parking lot at the local general store on Orr's Island, disgorging large men covered in mud and blood, dressed in denim and corduroy, dirty from a day of shrimp or scallop fishing, stepping inside for coffee and conversation. It is not the view from the Bowdoin Quad.

I'm an outsider here. In Maine parlance, I'm "from away." I'll always be "from away." Even if my wife and I have kids here, we would still be "from away." It's nothing personal, I know, but that's the way it is. I'm not from a lobstering family, I don't build boats, I don't log, and I don't fish. My car, a new Subaru Outback, is just one giveaway. My accent, or lack of one, is another. I'll never be from Maine. As I pass the lobstermen's homes, crossing the causeway onto an island ringed by rocky shores covered in pines, I review today's discussion.

In shaping and controlling nature, we are really dominating others with nature as our instrument.

The land suffers because, in part, people without power suffer. It is unfortunate that nature is often the victim of social dilemmas, yet there is a learning moment in such conflicts. Often, those who suffer as a result of other people's desires to save nature can teach those who do not. They can explain how forests are living things that can and do regenerate, given time, or how fishing or ranching is an honest day's work that can bring dignity to humans and nature alike. We cannot condemn those who supply us with what we need unless we think about how our own desires, for wood, meat, paper, coal, and fish, are the products of our own privilege. We are what we consume more than we'd like to admit. And class, sometimes together with race, other times separate from it, shapes how we interact with nature and with each other.

In shaping and controlling nature, we are really dominating others with nature as our instrument.

Staring at the icy road, I now realize a certain irony about my own career thus far as an environmental historian, as a teacher. I had to come to Maine to understand how class is the unstated problem in environmental politics. I had to teach at an elite private school to understand that social privilege usually dictates who gets to make the choices about protecting nature and who suffers when we degrade the environment. I had to come to Maine, the whitest state in the union, to find another facet of diversity so lacking in environmentalism today: class.

TEACHING AND PRACTICING DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

How do I get my students to see diversity as central to the past, present, and future of environmentalism when my classes, my campus, and my state seem so homogeneous? Small town Maine may not be as diverse as Los Angeles in terms of race, but there is diversity here, too. Brunswick is home, at least for a few more years, to a U.S. Naval Air Station and the town consists of prosperous college faculty and attorneys commuting to Portland or Boston living alongside Mainers of more modest means

who repaint boats or dig for clams. This is a poor state, as poor as New Mexico or West Virginia in its own way. Class matters here. That is one reason why the phrase “from away” carries such a sting. It is a defensive reflex against the hordes of tourists and prospective vacation homebuyers that inundate the state when the ice and snow melt.

One answer is to get the students out of the classroom into the community. Service learning is quickly becoming a popular technique here to pop what is commonly known as the “Bowdoin Bubble.” Service learning meshes nicely with Bowdoin’s commitment to the common good as expressed by its first president in his inaugural address. “It ought always to be remembered,” the Rev. Joseph McKeen said in September 1802, “that literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good, and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education.”¹⁶ Even when the statement is stripped of its nod to class privilege, it still resonates for students today.

Another kind of diversity matters, too, something that McKeen also extolled to the first generations of Bowdoin students – a grounding in the liberal arts. We take this mission seriously at Bowdoin. In our three intermediate core courses in environmental studies – one in the sciences, another in the social sciences, and my course in the humanities – we require students to work with local community partners on a range of environmental issues. The students conduct and interpret the research, then give their findings to their partners, which have included the Nature Conservancy of Maine, the Bayside (Portland) Community Association, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Friends of Casco Bay, Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and numerous local town governments. Students fan out into the archives and into the community, where they interview residents on any number of topics, ranging from water pollution to changes in hunting and fishing regulations.

The results have often been surprising for students and partners alike. For example, the Bayside Neighborhood Association in Portland wanted students to identify sources of potential lead and heavy metal contamination in their predominantly minority and working class district. What was initially proposed as a series of door-to-door interviews became a semester-long project where students blended

¹⁶ Joseph McKeen, *The Inaugural Address, Delivered in Brunswick, September 9th, 1802 . . . With an Eulogy* (Portland, Me: T. B. Wait and Co., 1807): 7. The actual date of the address was September 2, 1802.

oral histories with archival research. They found fire insurance maps, zoning laws, and historic photographs to document the presence of metal plating shops, paint factories, and railroad switching yards — all likely sources of endemic contamination. Their work is now part of ongoing efforts to compel public and private agencies to provide needed toxic remediation for the neighborhood.¹⁷

Another goal is to get our students to think beyond seeing environmental studies as simply the scientific study of nature and its political salvation. This strikes at the heart of longstanding debates over the content and purpose of environmental studies in higher education. Some have argued that environmental studies programs are fractured beyond repair. They lament the persistent critiques of environmentalism as damaging to the causes of the movement, or alternatively claim that political ideologies distort scholarly rigor. Additionally, they claim that natural science is at odds with social science and the humanities, and that environmental studies should rightfully be environmental science. Science and science alone, the most ardent of these advocates claim, is the highest and most useful branch of human knowledge. These debates mirror the larger arguments that consume environmentalism today and they are just as shortsighted and parochial. Just as environmentalism can be strengthened by an attention to social diversity, environmental studies can be reinforced by an attention to disciplinary diversity. The very complexity of environmental issues invites, even demands inquiries from all corners of the academy. It also requires a diversity of social perspectives.¹⁸

At Bowdoin, we try to model the best in interdisciplinary scholarship. Our introductory course is co-taught by a philosopher, a political scientist, and a biologist or chemist. Traditional disciplines still matter, and students cannot major in environmental studies alone; we require a coordinate degree so students can get a strong grounding in another discipline. The coordinate degree programs run the gambit, including disciplines like physics, English, or economics. Students cannot earn their environmental studies degree without strengthening their knowledge in another area outside of their explicitly environmental focus. Geology coordinate majors take

¹⁷ One model of community based service learning useful for me as a historian is Michael Lewis, "Reflections: 'This Class Will Write a Book': An Experiment in Environmental History Pedagogy," *Environmental History* 9 (October 2004): 604-19.

courses in the humanities and social sciences, and the same is true for those in French or psychology.

A final answer to why diversity matters is to explore how social diversity has long been part of the environmental movement and its antecedents. We now discuss environmental justice and persistent chemical toxins in our introductory course alongside more conventional topics like the Clean Air Act or biodiversity. Several instructors now offer courses on nearby places, like the future of Maine's Northern Forest communities, or classes that address the global environment from the perspectives of government, sociology, anthropology, or history.

In our new environmental chemistry course, a colleague demonstrates that scientific accuracy and attention to social justice are complementary. Moreover students have joined in our efforts to broaden and diversify our curriculum and extracurricular offerings. Several years ago, students organized and held a conference on race, justice, and the environment that attracted scholars and activists from Mexico, the United States, and Africa. Future Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai, founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, was the keynote speaker. Building upon the success of that conference, we are launching a new program where we hope to bring visiting scholars from non-Western nations to teach and study at Bowdoin.

Despite these achievements, we recognize that there is much more work to be done. We need to hire and retain more faculty of color and we need to reach more first generation students and students of color. In our efforts we continue look to other institutions for inspiration and guidance because today's universities and colleges are interconnected. Model programs at peer institutions include Middlebury College's deep commitment to facing the social and ecological challenges of climate change through engagement of all people, or Occidental College's program in urban and environmental policy, which engages Los Angeles as both its laboratory and its partner in studies of environmental justice, food security, and pollution control. The former program is broadly international in scope, the latter

¹⁸ For example, see the following exchange: Michael E. Soulé and Daniel Press, "What is Environmental Studies?" *BioScience* 48 (May 1998): 397-405; and Michael F. Maniates and John C. Whissel, "Environmental Studies: The Sky is Not Falling," *BioScience* 50 (June 2000): 509-17. Neither group of authors discusses the problem of social diversity in the classroom or faculty of environmental programs.

drawing upon the diverse populations of Southern California. There are other colleges doing great things, in addition to the many research universities whose scale and resources provide even more opportunities to connect diversity to research and pedagogy.

Ultimately, the reason for insisting upon diversity, in our curriculum as well as in our ranks, is calculated and simple: our graduates will likely become the next generation of environmental leaders. Blessed by historical circumstance with the fruits of privilege, my Bowdoin students may later attend graduate school and enter the academy, or chair the board of the Natural Resources Defense Fund, or run a local land trust. If I have done my job, they will be unable to see environmental issues as strictly scientific or technical concerns requiring like-minded solutions. They will step back and ask who sits at the table, makes the decisions, and lives with the consequences. Further, I hope they will realize that the most valuable benefit of a historical education is to embrace complexity and diversity, no matter how uncomfortable it may feel.

If environmentalism is to remain relevant in a diverse nation and an interconnected world, it must shed its blind faith in pure solutions and pure believers. As historian Thomas Dunlap argues wryly, environmentalism is akin to a secular religion with its own sacred texts and cherished rituals.¹⁹ This fervor has been its greatest strength, but it has often led to doctrinal and political orthodoxy over time, a tendency that I recount to my students every time I teach. The community of environmentalists has too often defined itself by who stands within the church rather than how the church might reach into the world. Seen this way, the historical exclusion of the poor, minorities, and those in the developing world is not so surprising. To continue the religious metaphor, faith is a living process and can change over time. Witness the effort by so many major organizations, from the Sierra Club to the National Wildlife Federation, to bring the once excluded into their ranks.

Yet the allegiance to purity is more than a social problem. It is an intellectual one as well. The environmental challenges facing our planet now, like climate change, are not merely technical problems requiring scientific solutions. They never have been. Their origins and

¹⁹ Thomas R. Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

consequences are historical and aesthetic, ethical and political, and they require the insights that only the humanities and social sciences can provide. Science yields vital information, but we will not stop rising temperatures by science alone.

Like so many environmental problems, but perhaps more so than any other, confronting climate change demands building community, and building community means embracing diversity.

I know a little of what my students may face in the future because I'm still learning these lessons myself. Every time I teach my class on North American environmental history, I have held many more debates on the premises of environmentalism. Every time, I've had to step back and question my own assumptions, my own sense of entitlement, and my reasons for insisting that my students learn to think historically. In the end, it comes down to the reason why I still, if reluctantly, call myself an environmentalist: we and the places we make are interconnected. I cannot see my fate as separate from the migrant laborers who harvested the apples that sit on my desk, the loggers who felled the trees that became the paper you hold in your hands now, or the factory employees who built the computer that I used to write this essay.

Like so many environmental problems, but perhaps more so than any other, confronting climate change demands building community, and building community means embracing diversity.

We are all connected in time, in history. Knowing this, I cannot teach or write about anything else.

As I turn onto the rutted dirt road that will take me home, I mull over my day. Teaching is nerve-wracking and after I finish a lecture or discussion, I feel a little like an actor after a long performance, spent and filled with self doubt. Today, those feelings are unusually strong.

I pull the car into the old barn, kill the engine and walk outside, closing the garage door behind me. Overhead, Orion is pushing off with his left heel from the pine trees ringing the meadow. In the distance, I hear the lumbering motor of a fishing boat, steaming to

port for the night. I look up, watch my breath swirl in the cold nighttime air, shuffle my feet and think.

It is when the silence grows uncomfortable that the learning begins.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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We Are Bridges

*Dahvi Wilson, Associate, Commonweal Institute, and Fellow,
Redefining Progress*

SUMMARY

Because every generation builds its consciousness upon the realities constructed by generations past, each new generation has the potential to see old problems in novel ways. The rising “Millennial” generation tends to interpret the world in more inherently systemic ways than did its predecessors. In order to successfully address the myriad social and environmental challenges we now face, healthy and constructive relationships between the generations must be developed and supported across the environmental and progressive movement.

KEY WORDS

Generation, youth, mentors, diversity, leadership, holistic, systemic, cooperation, succession

My mind is not my own. It contains the wisdom of centuries. I did not invent the wheel or find the cure for polio, develop calculus or visit the moon, yet each of these breakthroughs exists in my cultural memory – bequeathed to me by my ancestors. Each of the giant leaps taken by a previous generation is present in the background of my thoughts. They are the foundation of my understanding and provide firm ground from which I may launch into inquiries never investigated before. None of us is born onto virgin ground. The discoveries of the past constitute the soil from which our social innovations grow and our cultural adaptations blossom.

~

I was born in 1979, nearly nine years to the day after the first Earth Day celebration. My mother and father, having been in college during the late 60s, entered their parental and professional lives riding the waves of the early environmental movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the anti-Vietnam war movement. Theirs was an age of awakening, of introducing American society to concepts and battles that had long been ignored or underappreciated. Along with other members of their generation, they demanded that certain long-neglected entities, individuals, and social groups be granted consideration, protection, and rights under the law. They fought to sharpen the contrasts between society as it had come to be accepted, and society as it *could* be; to point out and relish difference. They showed us that different was beautiful, but that separate was not generally equal. They forced their nation to question long-held assumptions about women, people of color, and the reliability of government. They rallied to bring new focus and clarity to issues that had long been blurred into the background. Much of the progress of the 1960s was based upon drawing new lines and shouting for the recognition of the groups these new boundaries distinguished.

By the time I was born, the “environment” was no longer a novel or particularly abstract notion, and the idea of forced segregation in schools seemed inconceivable. I was able to attend a college that had only accepted men a few decades before, and my graduating classes in both college and graduate school were about 55 percent female. The battles my parents fought paved the path upon which I would walk, barely able to comprehend life as it had existed before, and without a doubt, taking their victories for granted.

Concepts that were unheard of when my parents were growing up were commonplace in my childhood. They became everyday aspects of my generation's cultural literacy.

Arising in the social consciousness during my most formative years were such diverse topics as the Internet, AIDS, climate change, institutional racism, and globalization. Ideas like these laid the backdrop for my mental development. Their existence made me different, in a very fundamental way, from my parents, just as the rise of television, rock and roll, and the iconic walk of Neil Armstrong had made them different from theirs.

In fact, every generation is different. As Dan King, Principal and CEO of the training firm Career Planning and Management, Inc. writes:

Much like sexuality, gender, ethnicity and race, a generational identity distinguishes each of us. Imprinted by major experiences and events – like Pearl Harbor, the JFK assassination, the Challenger explosion – a generation's shared identity shapes the values, ethics, and attitudes about the world in which its members live and work.¹

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Such distinctions have led those who study inter-generational interaction² to identify four primary, contemporary generations: the

¹ King, Dan. 2000. "Defining a Generation: Tips for Uniting Our Multi-Generational Workforce." Career Planning and Management, Inc.: Boston. <<http://www.careerfirm.com/generations.htm>>.

² The thesis that each generation has a unique identity has become popular fodder for business management consultants and conflict resolution specialists. Some other authors on the subject include Neil Howe, William Strauss, Carolyn Martin, Claire Raines, Ron Zemke.

Traditionalists – quiet, compliant, and thrifty children of World War II; the Baby Boomers – rebellious children of the 1950s and 60s; the Generation Xers – survivors of rising divorce rates, the material indulgence of the 1980s, and the spread of AIDS; and the Millennials – optimistic, over-therapied children of the Internet age. Each age-class builds its conceptions of reality upon the shoulders of those who came before, allowing succeeding generations to reach unprecedented new vantage points.

Because each generation starts from a new set of base assumptions, each is able to bring new perspectives and contributions to their communities. Intuitively, they develop their own unique ways of perceiving, interpreting, and addressing challenges both in the workplace, and in society more broadly.

Because each generation starts from a new set of base assumptions, each is able to bring new perspectives and contributions to their communities. Intuitively, they develop their own unique ways of perceiving, interpreting, and addressing challenges both in the workplace, and in society more broadly.

This natural evolution of thought bridges the past and the future, and allows for adaptation, creativity, and advancement. With each new generation comes a new energy and the potential to break out of the boxes of assumptions in which older generations have been imprisoned. We have so much to learn from each other. Just as older generations are invaluable to the pursuit of progress for their experience, wisdom, and knowledge of institutional history, younger generations are invaluable for their fresh sight and vision. With their new eyes, they hold the power to perceive new solutions to old problems and to continue the pursuits of those before them.



A few autumns ago, I was granted an invitation to participate in a dialogue-based, “Mentors and Apprentices” retreat, hosted by The Center for Whole Communities – an organization focused on

exploring, honoring, and deepening the connections between land, people and community.³ The Center is housed at Knoll Farm, a beautiful organic farm and gathering place in the hills of northern Vermont with a long history of social activism. As described in the retreat materials, the point of the gathering was:

. . . to practice a different exchange or transition between those at different points in their careers in the land movement. With the increased specialization and professionalism of the land movement, we've nearly lost the tradition of passing wisdom along to a younger generation in a deep and meaningful way. We will create space for honest and open dialogue on core issues about right livelihood, equity and fairness, and how best to live and act in this modern world.⁴

For several days, about twenty of us gathered for meals, hikes, meditations, and dialogues about the state of the modern environmental movement. We discussed the threats facing our society and the global community, and our hopes and fears for the future. The mentors participating in the gathering were incredible role models – leaders whose work and passion assured those of us just getting started of the positive change we could affect in the world. As exciting as it was to sit beside them, the retreat was a relatively somber affair. Though care was taken to ensure that our conversations were punctuated with occasions for joy and celebration, the weight of the work to be done rested heavy upon our shoulders, dark and heavy like the heavy fog that blanketed the still green hillsides every morning. There were five of us Millennials present, but the retreat had been designed and run by Boomers, and the effects were obvious: the Boomers were in mourning.

Frustrated and discouraged by the ultimate results of their generation's revolutions, the Boomers felt lost. They believed that they had failed, that all of the vision and passion for a better world that fueled their earlier years had fizzled away in the seductive onslaught of mass consumption and middle-age wealth seeking. They feared that they had left a broken and corrupted world to their children, and they

³ The Center for Whole Communities Mission Statement. To learn more, visit <http://www.wholecommunities.org>.

⁴ Forbes, Peter. Letter to participants in Mentors and Apprentices Retreat. 2005.

could see no way out. They realized, somewhere deep within themselves, that the problems they had left behind would likely not be solved within their lifetimes. They were starting to lose hope.

As the nature of the process began to reveal itself, we five Millennials began to experience frustrations of our own. Sensing the conversations stalling around questions of what had gone wrong and where we had lost our way, the Millennials were left unsatisfied. We had little use for meditating on what wasn't; we were too full of energy to explore what *could be*. We were just beginning our professional lives, full of big dreams for our futures; we did not need to mourn the failures of the past. Our eyes were focused on the vital and vibrant future, a future very much alive. We understood that old ways of seeing had run their proponents into dead-ends. What had been a critical new vision forty years ago had reached the limits of its capacity.

The world we were hoping to create could not be simply “environmentally friendly,” solely “socially just,” or purely “economically sound.” It had to be all of these things.

As we discussed the issue with each other, we realized that all five of us seemed to share the same intuitive notion about how to forge a new path. It seemed simple, so obvious in fact, that we began to refer to it as “the duh factor.” We realized that none of the social problems we had come to discuss in the retreat were independent of each other. All were connected. Just as the loss of any single component of an ecosystem can unravel the delicate balance maintained there, so too can the loss of any single issue in a larger suite of progressive ideals similarly disintegrate our dreams for a more perfect world.

The world we were hoping to create could not be simply “environmentally friendly,” solely “socially just,” or purely “economically sound.” It had to be all of these things.

We realized that we could no longer remain locked up in old, fragmented ways of thinking. While our elders were discussing how to maintain hope, we were living it. We explored ideas about crossing boundaries, about learning to understand each other and speak each

others' languages, and the possibilities of helping organizers increase their familiarity with each other across traditional issue lines. We were considering the nexus of economics, social justice, environmental sustainability, health, and human welfare, on a domestic and international scale. We came to understand the new sight our generation would bring to the world. We would be bridges.

What we didn't realize until the retreat was over was that within our youthful spirit and faith, we also had the potential to embody the hope our elders needed. Though the retreat was intended to be an equal meeting place of the younger and the older, traditional dynamics of influence subtly remained and prevented some of this mutual bolstering from taking place. Had they but surrendered themselves completely to the future for a moment, freed themselves from their privileged positions of knowledge and wisdom, envisioned themselves as enablers rather than teachers, then all of us might have left the retreat a little more fulfilled. This experience taught me, more potently than anything before it, that mentors are not simply responsible for passing information down, but that they are a critical force in raising new ideas up – nurturing, strengthening, and applying these novel notions in the present day. Turning these dreams into reality is something we can only do *together*. We Millennials need their support to build our confidence, grant us legitimacy, and help us incorporate lessons from the past into our thinking, and the Boomers need us to remind them that the future is not dead yet, and to assure them that the noble work will continue.



Every generation makes great strides, and every generation grows so proud of the contributions it makes that its members become convinced that their answers are the only answers, forgetting that every generation before them once felt the same. However, history is a constant exchange of tradition, knowledge, and power from one generation to the next. We need to nurture the wisdom that each generation brings in order to continue our cultural development. It should be the duty and pleasure of an outgoing generation to welcome in the next.

Unfortunately, in America, the Boomers who still make up the leadership of most of the nation's social non-profits, have been slow

to turn over control to their successors. In 2005, an organization called Building Movement published a monograph that summarized the findings of a three-year study they conducted, “investigating the differences between older and young people working in progressive social change organizations.”⁵ The report titled, “Up Next: Generation Change and the Leadership of Nonprofit Organizations,” offers many interesting insights about the variations between different generations of individuals working together for social change. Among them was the realization that:

As the Baby Boomers edge into their 50s and 60s, nonprofit organizations will soon be making room for a new generation of leaders. The sector as a whole, however, has only just begun to anticipate the shift of this older leadership cohort – directors, boards, staff members – who grew up with organizations founded in the 1960s and 1970s. . . . The realization that Baby Boom leaders will be leaving their jobs in the next decade has begun to send shockwaves through the nonprofit sector . . . The Boomers described their difficulty in finding and grooming young leadership, and their frustrations with what they saw as the younger generation’s unwillingness to ‘pay their dues’ and work their way up within organizations. Younger people described the lack of support for the next generation of leadership . . . Few older leaders could imagine leaving their organizations and worried about who would carry on their work.⁶

I believe that the tendency of the Boomer generation to hold on so tightly to their power and control has hindered them, their successors, and the movement as a whole. By stifling new styles of operating, new ideas, and new ways of addressing the problems we face as a society, the Boomer generation has severely handicapped its ability to innovate and adapt to the new reality.

Rather than “working their way up” the traditional ranks of the old organizations, many young people are dropping out to form their own organizations, only to find themselves in stiff financial and ideological competition with their more entrenched elders. The demographics of the

⁵ Kunruether, Frances. 2005. “Up Next: Generation Change and the Leadership of Nonprofit Organizations.” Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.: 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*: 2,5.

major environmental groups reflect this trend, as the majority of their dues paying members continue to be over fifty years old.⁷ Recognizing this, the major environmental groups are constantly grasping for new media and “hip” brand images to attract younger constituents. While many, if not all, of these organizations pay significant lip service to the need to engage youth, few are willing to trust young people in leadership roles.⁸ It might behoove these organizations to consider turning over more of their leadership to the next generation – establishing a close advisory team of elders to support and mentor these new leaders, but giving them the freedom to shape their own paths.

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In fact, doing so might also strengthen the movement. As noted in the 2003 United Nations World Youth Report:

The fact remains that as movements and their activists age there is always need for renewal from the grassroots, or even for the creation of alternative movement forms and foci . . . [Numerous] examples illustrate how a new generation of young people [have] identified the need for a response and invented new forms of activism.⁹

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We are reaching a moment in modern history when new solutions are desperately needed. Old strategies of organizing, educating, and

⁷ “Toward a New Ecological Majority.” American Environics. http://www.americanenvironics.com/PDF/Road_Map_for_Ecological_Majority_AE.pdf. Accessed on the World Wide Web: May 7, 2007. <http://www.americanenvironics.com/Files_Publications/Road_Map_for_Ecological_Majority_AE.pdf>

⁸ I believe that the Sierra Club may stand out as an exception to this trend.

⁹ *World Youth Report 2003: The Global Situation of Young People*. Chapter 5. New York: United Nations Publications. 2003: 137. <<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wy03.htm>>

communicating are proving incapable of addressing such immense global problems as climate change, species extinction, the ever-increasing income disparities between rich and poor, and the rise of a global corporate oligarchy.

Luckily, the Millennials are coming at these problems from a new angle. Unlike the Boomers who built their social movements in an era of differentiation, Millennials have emerged during a historical moment in which nearly every field of science has begun to turn toward systems-level, relational thinking. The study of ecology has brought the science of interconnection to the field of biology. Quantum physics and relativity have taught us the fundamental importance of relationships in understanding space and time. The social sciences have taught us to be distrustful of absolutes and to consider political, ecological, economic, and social contexts before assessing other cultures and historical events. Studies of human well-being have begun to demonstrate that human fulfillment may be determined, in large part, by healthy relationships with others and strong community life. Now, the rising significance of relationships in our social consciousness has birthed a generation of individuals who more intrinsically seek relational, holistic explanations of the world around them. It is only a matter of time until the “duh factor” inevitably alters the way the social movements of the future operate.

We are reaching a moment in modern history when new solutions are desperately needed. Old strategies of organizing, educating, and communicating are proving incapable of addressing such immense global problems as climate change, species extinction, the ever-increasing income disparities between rich and poor, and the rise of a global corporate oligarchy.

Whereas the Boomers continue to build outreach strategies that focus on specialization within specific issue areas, I believe the Millennials are intuitively drawn to the interconnections between issue areas. As “Up Next” confirms,

. . . Younger participants were particularly struck by the inability of different groups to work together. They expressed frustration that the larger social change goal was subverted by individual 'ego' needs.¹⁰

As a result of this frustration, I predict that the solutions Millennials envision will be far different from those of their predecessors. While the Boomer's movements may have worked to build social awareness about different challenging issues in the 1960s and 70s, the Millennials' movements will seek to cultivate the synergies that emerge when traditional issue-based advocacy groups, once disconnected from each other, unite around their common goals and values.

The next generation of social movements will employ coalitions, coordination, and cooperation to create solutions capable of addressing our systemic problems holistically.

As clearly captured by one participant in Building Movement's "Generational Leadership Listening Sessions:"

We need to build more partnerships, look around to action and take an active interest in what other people are doing. And not just pretend we're the only ones doing this work. We need to look forward in unexpected places. We need to open our arms . . . to really build a movement that includes everyone.¹¹

My mind is not my own. I am humbled by the knowledge that the cultural soil upon which I tread has been built up, torn down, and built up again perpetually by those who have come before me. My world is built upon a mountain of former discoveries, insights, and ideas, a formation of cultural wisdom and history. Every generation finds its footing on the discoveries of the past, and uses this foundation to leap into new dimensions of thought, understanding, and innovation.

It is a beautiful progression, deeply innate in us and natural, but to truly nurture this progression, we must strive to be bridges between past and future worlds. It is the duty and challenge of every generation

¹⁰ *Ibid.*:10.

¹¹ Kunreuther, Frances, Ludovic Blain, and Kim Fellner. 2004. "Generational Leadership Listening Sessions." New York: Building Movement Project. <http://www.buildingmovement.org/art-man/uploads/glls_report_001.pdf>: 39.

to build communities, organizations, and institutions that support and value healthy interaction among age cohorts; structures strong enough to span time and experience; and enduring enough to lead us, eternally, into a hopeful future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dahvi Wilson graduated Magna Cum Laude from Brown University in 2001 with a degree in Environmental Studies. She received her Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) in 2007. Her professional experience includes air quality planning and policy development with the California Air Resources Board, teaching and curriculum design with the Teton Science Schools, facilitation and leadership work with The Murie Center, coordination and outreach with the Yale F&ES Office of Strategic Initiatives, and nearly ten years of guiding wild rivers. She is a student of progressive politics, a steering committee member for the Next Generation Retreat of the Center for Whole Communities, an Associate of the Commonweal Institute, and a Fellow of Redefining Progress.

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21st Century Environmentalists: Diversity, Hope, Unity, and Action for a Better World

Bryan Garcia, Program Director, Center for Business and the Environment at Yale

SUMMARY

Today's environmentalists must be multi-lingual not only in the languages of the world, but more importantly, in the languages of business and public policy. The author gives a personal account of the dangers of first impressions and the social stigmas of being an environmentalist. His personal experiences highlight the emergence of a new paradigm where the 21st century environmentalists will be known for their entrepreneurial spirit and patriotism alongside environmental idealism.

KEY WORDS

Hispanic, diversity, Peace Corps, environment, climate change, clean energy, California, Connecticut, entrepreneur

*“The horizon leans forward,
Offering you space to place new steps of change.
Here, on the pulse of this fine day
You may have the courage
To look up and out and upon me,
The Rock, the River, the Tree, your country.”*
— Maya Angelou¹

My name is Bryan Garcia. I grew up in Southern California, the son of a sacrificing Mexican father, a retired hardworking construction foreman, and an independent Puerto Rican mother, a retired change management consultant and electrical engineer. Mine was a middle class family in a community comprised of Blacks, Whites, Asians, and Hispanics. My neighborhood was as diverse as anyone would imagine a small Los Angeles suburb to be – a virtual melting pot of the “new” America. Growing up in a racially and socially varied environment – among rich and poor, advantaged and disadvantaged, laborers and academics – I learned how to accept different points of view and to seek common ground.

There is a significant Hispanic presence in Los Angeles, and with a surname like Garcia, one would assume that I speak Spanish. I don’t. Though my family was comfortable with its identity, I never felt my ethnicity was front and center in defining who I was, and I suspect it was because of that, that I never learned to speak the language.

There is a significant Hispanic presence in Los Angeles, and with a surname like Garcia, one would assume that I speak Spanish. I don’t.

It was not until I traveled to Kazakhstan, as a volunteer for the Peace Corps, that I realized my Hispanic ethnicity could be something in which people were very interested. Fans of American soap operas and Latin novellas, the people of Kazakhstan found unending entertainment in the amazing resemblance they perceived between my

¹ On the Pulse of Morning by Maya Angelou, read at the Inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton on January 19, 1993.

face and that of a character named “Cruz” on the American serial *Santa Barbara*. While Cruz was not exactly the figure I would have preferred to have been identified with, I should not complain. The similarities earned me free Russian language lessons, savory Ukrainian meals, and trips to the country – all essential things for a struggling Peace Corps volunteer living on a modest stipend.

Despite the perks, the experience of being a Hispanic-American abroad, where people were constantly making judgments about me based on a brief interaction, showed me how powerful first impressions can be. It also showed me that my ethnicity played a starring role in the creation of those impressions. For the first time in my life, the identity I was assigned by my community was that of a Hispanic first and everything else second, and the significance of those first moments of interaction should never be underestimated. It is the phenomenon that Malcolm Gladwell revealed to us so clearly in *Blink* – a useful, instinctual tool with unfortunate liabilities – first impressions are often misguided and require time to overcome.

It is, after all, not only ethnic minorities who face such snap judgments. It is easy to anticipate what would happen if you were to meet a new acquaintance at a family gathering or a social event and introduce yourself as an “environmentalist.” The list of preconceived notions they associate with environmentalism is likely to include: “tree hugger,” “Birkenstock wearer,” “Liberal,” “greeny,” “extremist,” “communist,” “vegetarian,” and, my favorite, “anti-capitalist.” For some reason, we “environmentalists” have a social stigma that hangs over us like a plague. It is as if caring for the environment denotes dreamy idealism and the prevention of economic progress.

It is, after all, not only ethnic minorities who face such snap judgments. It is easy to anticipate what would happen if you were to meet a new acquaintance at a family gathering or a social event and introduce yourself as an “environmentalist.”

But just like many others, these assumptions often prove to be false.

I, for example, do not fit neatly into any of these categories. Though the physical environment was always a part of my life, it was not

always a positive force. My brother, a construction foreman like my father, suffers from asthma, as does my sister, a practicing farmer. I happened to be the lucky one – free from the clutches of asthma, but still bothered by the health impacts of suburban smog on my family.

In other ways, though, my relationship with the natural world might appear more textbook. As a kid, the environment served as a refuge for me, a place to get away from the difficulties of home and the constant quarreling of my parents, who would eventually separate and then divorce. The memory of the days our family spent together outdoors in “the environment,” camping alongside the beautiful June Lake in California, were the happiest days of my life.

The natural world came to embody security, peace, and hope for me, and my relationship with it continued well into adulthood, when I found myself at a new crossroads in my life. An undergraduate at University of California Berkeley, I saw my childhood dream of becoming a professional athlete come to an abrupt end when I was cut from the school’s baseball team, and my world was forever changed.

I think back on that cold winter morning, distraught, dejected and searching for meaning, and I realize - it was in that moment of despair where I discovered, once again, the capacity of hope contained in the natural world. In that moment, I was reborn, inspired to serve. All of the energy I had channeled into athletics over the first twenty years of my life would be invested into academics to help me better understand how I could help protect the environment. I pursued a degree in political economy of natural resources – policy, business, and the environment – a powerful and popular combination, and I continued this line of training into graduate school.

When I completed my Masters, I had the great fortune of spending six years of my life in the investment and renewable energy sector working for the State of Connecticut. During this period, I was responsible for coordinating one of the first sub-national efforts to confront climate change.

And suddenly, there I was – a Hispanic *and* an environmentalist – without premeditation or self-consciousness, and no one knew what to expect of me. A progressive Democrat and Hispanic, I was the climate change coordinator, under a Republican administration, for the governor’s Steering Committee on Climate Change. Due to the diversity of my training and background, I was able to speak many

languages to many different people. Rather than speak about climate change as an environmental issue, I learned to speak about it in the language of energy, industrial, and economic development policies – the language of all political parties. I applied all I had learned to relate to diverse stakeholders in their own tongues, while maintaining my own unique perspective.

And suddenly, there I was – a Hispanic *and* an environmentalist – without premeditation or self-consciousness, and no one knew what to expect of me.

I have never felt like I had a competitive disadvantage or handicap as a Hispanic environmentalist. Rather, I believe I have a complementary set of skills and perspectives to add to the policy dialogue, representative of a different type of environmentalist. And I know I am only one of many. There is no longer any such thing as a cookie cutter environmentalist. We come in all colors, all nationalities, and all disciplines. To be leaders in the new environmental movement, we will have to be more than interdisciplinary; we will have to be multilingual, alert to the backgrounds from which our colleagues have come and able to communicate with them across our differences.

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We are at the dawn of a new era of environmentalism, a moment of paradigm shift. We have reached a proverbial tipping point, and “environmentalists” are being justly re-branded. There is growing recognition that the inclusion of professionals from a variety of

disciplines will be essential in environmental problem solving. The 21st century environmentalist will not only be a conservationist, but will also be an entrepreneur and a patriot – capable of communicating in disparate ways across multiple disciplines, in different languages and among diverse cultures.

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As New York Times reporter Tom Friedman recently wrote, “Green is the next red, white, and blue.” The solutions to the Earth’s most pressing environmental problems reside in our ability to recognize the significance of diversity, and to unite our collective hopes for a better environment and a better world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Bryan Garcia is the program director for the Center for Business and the Environment at Yale. Prior to his arrival at Yale he served as director of energy market initiatives for Connecticut Innovations, a quasi-public venture capital fund. In his position, he invested resources that made Connecticut the regional leader in voluntary clean energy markets including being a co-founder of SmartPower and creating the EPA and DOE award-winning Connecticut

Clean Energy Communities Program. He was the climate change coordinator for the Governor’s Steering Committee on Climate Change where he served to facilitate interagency and cross sector collaboration to develop the state’s climate plan. This first-of-its-kind

sub-national effort on climate change received international recognition and won an EPA Climate Protection Award in 2005.

He is a returned Peace Corps Volunteer where he specialized in NGO capacity building and environmental education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. He has a BS degree in political economy of natural resources from UC Berkeley, an MPA in public-non-profit management, an MBA in finance from NYU, and an MEM in environmental management from Yale University.

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Combating Climate Change: Why All Should Be Involved

Jerome C. Ringo, President, Apollo Alliance

SUMMARY

It often takes great tragedy to truly unite people. The long-lasting effects of Hurricane Katrina provide the environmental movement with an important opportunity to increase its diversity. The storm and its aftermath should ignite passion for change among everyone. And it is the responsibility of those well-educated in matters of the environment to create a sense of understanding in those who are unfamiliar but eager to learn.

KEY WORDS

Environment, diversity, Katrina, climate change, National Wildlife Federation, Apollo Alliance, alternative energy, environmental movement, education, faith-based communities

In order for us to be successful in the climate change movement and in the promotion of other environmental agendas, it is imperative to include all people. In the past, people of color and people living in poverty have suffered the brunt of poor environmental practices. Now they must be part of the solution. They must be engaged in a way that fosters more inclusive activism, one that reflects the magnitude of the problem and places a demand on policy makers.

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In this way, Hurricane Katrina must be viewed by those in and out of the environmental movement as a call for action. It is through compassion, understanding, education, and our concentrated energies that we must expand the spirit of hope among the people whose lives were devastated by the storm. Further, we must raise our level of activism to help reduce and eliminate those things that contribute to the intensity of such events, and we must make sure that all the people who were directly affected become part of this movement. It is incumbent on all to be a part of preventing another Katrina and its aftermath.

Further, we must raise our level of activism to help reduce and eliminate those things that contribute to the intensity of such events, and we must make sure that all the people who were directly affected become part of this movement. It is incumbent on all to be a part of preventing another Katrina and its aftermath.

The causes and consequences of Hurricane Katrina extended far beyond what the mainstream media reported. The short-term impact was visibly obvious; but the longer-term impact and the root-causes of the devastation have gone mostly unseen. Neglect by the government, the enervating effects of bureaucracy, and feeling diminished hope has impacts that can span generations.

The greatest loss to the people of Louisiana affected by Katrina is not only the separation of families but the great loss of a culture. After testifying in Congress on the importance of rebuilding the coast of Louisiana, the jazz great Wynton Marsalis talked about rebuilding the culture of the Louisiana. The only hope of New Orleans regaining its luster is in an effort that reaches across cultural, economic, and racial lines, bringing those elements together to collectively make New Orleans the grand city of its past. Citizens of this great city are now spread across America without reason to return and with very little support in place to embrace their return.

It has been two years since the storm, and yet the recovery has been minimal. Still today, over 100,000 people have not returned and unfortunately many will not. The culture of the city is clearly in its people, and its people are spread across America like a puzzle that's been broken in many pieces, a picture that may never come together again. I can only hope that government on all levels will both appreciate and embrace the idea of a more planned, structured, environmental protection system, and create a city that will be a magnet for cultural rebirth and growth.

It is not surprising that inherent in such devastation is the inspiration for recognizing climate change and implementing better planning. The warm temperatures of the earth have warmed the oceans in areas like the Gulf of Mexico, which is an essential part of my own community in Louisiana. The high water temperatures contributed to the intensity of the storms Wilma and Katrina, which ravaged the coastline. These climatic changes could result in other catastrophic natural events in other communities across the country and they are a direct result of global warming.

We have vulnerable populations in the U.S. – poor people, who are disproportionately impacted and are not equipped to handle the impacts of climate change. There is a recognized lack of involvement by poorer Americans in alleviating the challenges of climate change.

This is not because this segment of the population does not care. Poor peoples' priorities list consist of more basic issues like next month's rent, health care, how to keep their kids off of drugs, and the challenges of crime and drugs in their communities. Global conservation issues are not at the top of their list. But it has been shown that minorities care as much, or more, about the environment than people from higher socio-economic backgrounds (as explained in the Bonta/Jordan piece in this volume). They simply do not possess time or money to address these issues. I've asked many in the "cancer alley" community of Louisiana, "What good is next month's rent if you're dying of cancer as a result of a chemical plant sited adjacent to your property?" We must encourage the poor to reframe or rewrite their priority list, so that a healthy environment is as important to their lives and their children's lives as next month's rent.

It came as no surprise that, as I volunteered in the Katrina recovery centers, people began to ask me questions about the strange weather patterns that resulted in the events of that day. The fact that three major hurricanes collided with our shores within a two-month period of each other raised concerns amongst citizens who in the past showed little interest in global weather patterns. The trauma and displacement altered these individuals' entire realities and they began asking questions about global warming. It is our responsibility as a movement to seize the opportunity to engage a public hungry for making a change. Making connections with interested people is what is needed to make the changes that we in this movement desire. People now want answers to both what causes such intense natural disasters and what we may do in the future to prevent them. Those that have been disproportionately impacted in the past deserve answers today.

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THE SOLUTION

To successfully connect all communities and therefore thoroughly address this problem that is impacting us all, we must establish

common ground. Global warming and climate change is the most galvanizing issue of our time. It has the ability to bring together people from all walks of life because the impacts of this issue are experienced by everyone that inhabits the earth. The sense of urgency around global warming will not only engage, but motivate an immediate call for action that will infuse activism at a time when most involved in the environmental movement are working on many diverse issues.

To engage the poor we must connect to their communities by educating them to take ownership of environmental issues and understand the economic benefit of addressing environmental concerns. The old belief that a clean environment would cost us jobs is no longer prevalent. Today a clean environment can provide good jobs that can stimulate communities at all levels, particularly those communities that have been economically disadvantaged

In order to promote energy conservation in poor communities, we need to make sure that it is affordable and accessible to people in those communities. It's the responsibility of our government to subsidize poor communities and assist them in operating more energy efficiently. Our government spends millions to subsidize corporations in this country annually that operate within our communities; there should be equal opportunity and consideration given to assisting the needs of the poor in reaping the same environmental and economic benefits that are available.

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This calls for a paradigm shift. In the wheel of time, we're reaching a tipping point where environmental damage will change the normal course of everyday life in drastic ways, and we need to construct a future that gets us back on track. To do so we must engage people from all walks of life in the environmental movement through the climate change and conservation windows.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

A twenty-plus year career in the petrochemical industry taught me the true value that exists within the products of the world, but also introduced me to the consequences of the production process. Our country relies on specific and limited sources of energy. The problem with this limited scope is obvious – if it becomes difficult to obtain these sources, the consumer suffers. We must continue our research into alternative types of energy and their implementation in order to combat such situations.

In the 2004 presidential election, presidential candidate John Edwards spoke of two Americas – the “haves” and the “have nots” and he challenged us to fix our problems in a way that does not further exploit the “have nots.” The American public now recognizes the need to diversify our energy portfolio. In addition to strengthening our battle against climate change, decreasing our dependence on fossil fuel and stabilizing our domestic energy politics, we will be making changes that help and unite both Americas.

Using alternative types of energy has a three fold benefit. It reduces our dependency on foreign oil, creates jobs in America by stimulating the economy, and reduces the amount of carbon we release into the atmosphere. The need for alternative energies contributing to a more diversified energy portfolio will only act in the best interest of our economy, our energy security, and our quality of life.

A critical element of the success of the movement is to engage everyone as change agents. If each and every individual would make a personal commitment to increasing their level of participation in an effort to promote change, then change would occur. The ever-growing changes in our climate and environment demand new and innovative approaches in addressing these critical issues. It will require more than just passive conversation. It requires action. We all have contributed to the environmental state that we experience, and we all must contribute to the solution.

Recently, President Bush publicly announced that global warming is real, opening up the issue to debate and enabling us to make connections to people that were previously skeptical but who now want to know what will make a difference. We now have a receptive public, and it is imperative that we educate all people on what they can do to make a difference. Letting people know how small changes, like

changing to florescent light bulbs, riding a bike, and selecting a more efficient car are the types of small things they can do to help make a big difference. This type of knowledge is simple and empowering for all people.

Connecting with children is a high priority and presents a major opportunity to influence change. This movement needs to further educate and expose young people to environmental messages, presenting them with ideas and things to teach their parents. Pumping money into education for children of all ages related to conservation and global warming issues is a prudent measure. Educating kids is the key to educating people. We need to go back to the basics, to really meet them where they are, to help them understand.

Pumping money into education for children of all ages related to conservation and global warming issues is a prudent measure. Educating kids is the key to educating people.

Kids are very disconnected from nature and global issues, and without a global view it's difficult to make global environmental connections. Author of *Last Child in the Woods* Richard Louv refers to this nature-child disconnect as "nature deficit disorder." A Kaiser Family Foundation study found that the average American child spends 44.5 hours per week (6+ hours per day) in front of an electronic screen.¹

Programs like the National Wildlife Federation's "The Green Hour" are challenging us to infuse outdoor time into the lives of children. The Green Hour's theory is that "by giving our children a "Green Hour" a day – a bit of time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world – we can set them on the path toward physical, mental, and emotional well-being."² It is necessary for the preservation and future of this movement to change our educational systems so that we can increase youth exposure to environmental ideas and foster a global awareness.

¹ The Kaiser Family Foundation Study. "Media Multi-tasking" Changing the Amount and Nature of Young People's Media Use." <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia030905nr.cfm>.

² National Wildlife Federation Website – The Green Hour. <http://www.greenhour.org/section/about>.

Another major opportunity for the movement exists in connecting with faith-based communities. From the environmental perspective, many of these communities recognize that environmental issues are moral issues and believe that we need to take care of the earth. There is interdenominational opportunity for all to be involved. Further, religious communities are a critical player politically and their thoughts on the environment are changing how they think politically. Faith-based organizations are also major supporters of the poor and other marginalized groups of people. We need to leverage the power of their diverse networks to build bridges among many different communities and help construct an expanded movement.

CONCLUSION

The issue of global warming *can* create a platform for collaboration of diverse people and bring the issues of poor people to the table. This is a civil rights issue – fighting for the rights of our people to live in a healthy environment. Reconnecting all communities to nature and providing them with a good reason to be engaged is important.

The biggest obstacle blocking us from moving forward as a movement is the individual's unchanging attitude about how exactly to be successful in this movement. The old guard of leadership of conservation organizations, who are unwilling to advance their way of thinking by embracing issues like diversity, must dissolve. A new generation with a new way of thinking, armed with a vision for positive change, adequate education, and interested in inclusivity must now take the lead.

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True change can only be initiated by true leadership. Those that lead this country and make policies must lead by example and

represent their constituencies by supporting the issues that are in their best interest. Effective leadership is only successful by proactive action. We have, for decades as a country and as an environmental community, been in a reactive mode. Because of the clear sense of urgency related to environmental issues, reactive positioning is both ineffective and inappropriate. We must take positive action and take the lead in responding to these more critical issues in a proactive fashion.

Diversity is important because all that have been impacted must be involved in order for us to handle the large challenge of climate change. It is critical that we entertain the views of all people who are being affected so that we may embrace meaningful solutions that resolve issues that impact us all. Different views, different ideas, different opinions strengthen the movement, and the resiliency of the movement, on these issues.

The next step is to be inclusive and to recognize the call for action. Inclusiveness is making sure there is equal representation of all without leaving any point of view out of the equation. Inclusiveness is being able to respectfully accept the views of others while incorporating your views into the overall endeavor. There must be a call for action that causes all people to react in one accord decisively.

Being a change agent is something we can all do. To be a change agent requires a level of personal commitment and willingness by each individual to have their contribution promote real change. You also must believe that your contribution with others collectively will create greater change. We must focus more on what makes us alike than how we are different, and take those common denominators and focus on how we can use them as catalysts for change. With the strength of numbers, a desire for success, an element of passion, and true commitment, we shall experience success.

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Change is never easy. To see change to its completion will require some failures and discomfort, but it this is how we learn and grow. Our successes we will replicate, our failures we will not repeat. Our failures have greater lessons than our successes and incorporating those lessons into action drives a society to be better. This problem is all of ours, and we should all be part of that solution.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jerome C. Ringo is the immediate past Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Wildlife Federation, the first African-American to hold such a post with a major national conservation organization. His rise to this leadership position followed a unique path, giving him a special understanding about the need to protect wildlife and the communities that depend on it for everyday life. Mr. Ringo is currently the President of the Apollo Alliance, which

works to provide a message of optimism and hope, framed around rejuvenating our nation's economy by creating the next generation of American industrial jobs and treating clean energy as an economic and security mandate to rebuild America.

In 2007, Mr. Ringo is in residence at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies as the McCluskey Fellow.

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Spirit, Stewardship, Justice, and the Earth: The Power of Religion for the Sake of the Environment

The Reverend Fletcher Harper, Executive Director, GreenFaith

SUMMARY

Religious communities are becoming vocal and involved in efforts to protect the environment. While the number of religious groups actively engaged in environmental work is still relatively small, growth and interest appear likely to continue growing rapidly in the coming decades. Because of this growth and the size and influence of the religious community collectively, environmental leaders are seeking to develop partnerships with religious groups. The author offers an introduction to three basic religious themes around which religious-environmental work can be organized – spirit, stewardship, and justice in relation to the Earth. Drawing on his experience as leader of GreenFaith, an interfaith environmental coalition, and as an Episcopal priest, he articulates a broadly religious basis for environmental care, and offers an introduction to concepts and language that environmental leaders can use to build relationships with people of diverse religious backgrounds.

KEY WORDS

Religion, environment, spirituality, environmental justice, stewardship, religious environmentalism, GreenFaith

Over the past several years, there has been tremendous growth in religious engagement around the environment, building on work conducted by a small, dedicated number of individuals and groups since the early 1990s and before. During the fall of 2007, for instance, several thousand religious institutions hosted screenings of *An Inconvenient Truth*, the Oscar-winning documentary on global warming, educating hundreds of thousands of individuals about this issue and providing opportunities for response. Several years before, a publicity campaign entitled, "What Would Jesus Drive?" caught the nation's eye, focusing attention on a religious critique of the nation's SUV craze. Increasing numbers of authors have noted the potential power of the religious community on behalf of the environment, citing statistics about the large number and collective power of congregations and religious communities, both domestically and globally. The media has invested significant attention in a recent growth in nascent environmental leadership emerging from the evangelical Christian community, a welcome, interesting development. The growth in religious responses to the environment is palpable. Momentum is clearly building.

Over the past several years, there has been tremendous growth in religious engagement around the environment, building on work conducted by a small, dedicated number of individuals and groups since the early 1990s and before.

To enable a partnership between religious and environmental communities to reach its potential, environmental leaders must understand what motivates people of diverse religious backgrounds to engage the environment. There are three basic themes around which all religious engagement pertaining to the environment gathers. These themes are spirit, stewardship and justice in relation to the earth. This essay seeks to introduce various religious dimensions of these themes in an effort to support the growth of this partnership.

To describe what these three themes mean from a religious perspective, let me tell you some stories.

There are three basic themes around which all religious engagement pertaining to the environment gathers. These themes are spirit, stewardship and justice in relation to the earth.

THE PRESENCE OF SPIRIT IN NATURE

An eight year old boy pesters his father to get him a Game Boy, a handheld electronic video game. His father, seeing that all their son's friends have such a device, relents. The boy is instantly hooked and, as if surgically attached, is inseparable from his new gadget. There's no place that's off limits, and arguments ensue about where he can and can't play – not at the dinner table and only after homework is finished. The father regrets the purchase immediately.

Several months later, the father takes his son from New Jersey to southwestern Montana, to visit the boy's grandparents who summer in a trailer outside of Yellowstone Park, in the Madison River Valley. The boy is enthralled by his Game Boy, mashing the buttons in the back seat as they drive to the Newark airport. After takeoff, when the stewardess announces that electronic devices are now permitted, the boy turns on his Game Boy as if it were a life support system. Hours later, after landing, they rent a car and head north from Salt Lake City through high desert country. The boy plays his video game during their entire drive.

Finally they arrive. The boy gets out of the car and stretches. He looks around him at the 10,000 foot mountains that rise on either side of the Madison Valley, jutting up towards the clouds like muscles coming up out of the earth. He cranes his neck and looks up at tall, elegant pine trees, reaching straight up to the sky, one hundred and twenty five feet of green verticality. He's mesmerized by the tremendous river, filled high with snow melt from the mountaintops, surging and crashing through its banks not even 100 yards away. He inhales deeply; the cool, crisp air tickles his lungs and quickens his heart.

For the next week, his Game Boy is forgotten.

When I tell this story while preaching, people smile. They understand. "As a father," I tell them, "as odd as it sounds, to me this is a story about power. There aren't many things powerful enough to

separate an eight year-old from video games for an entire week without any argument.” People nod, and they smile again. They know it’s true. They also know, without needing to be told, that it’s a story that’s not just about children and their video games – it’s a story about adults and the ways we distance ourselves from connecting with the earth. We’ve all had experiences like this, whether in relation to a charismatic landscape halfway around the world or the unique elegance of the curve in a tree limb right down the block. We’ve all, at one time, put down the equivalent of our own Game Boys and let our jaws drop. We’ve all had our breath taken away by the power and splendor of creation.

We’ve all had experiences like this, whether in relation to a charismatic landscape halfway around the world or the unique elegance of the curve in a tree limb right down the block. We’ve all, at one time, put down the equivalent of our own Game Boys and let our jaws drop. We’ve all had our breath taken away by the power and splendor of creation.

The human experience of the depth and sacred dimension of nature is universal, powerful and transformative, full of hope, awe and strength. People from every cultural, religious and socio-economic background have had spiritual or religious experiences in the natural world, and the power of these experiences is considerable. This connection is the first reason the environmental movement is strengthened by a relationship with religious communities.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES IN NATURE – A UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUS RESOURCE

I have spent half a decade listening to people tell these stories in a range of settings – in their churches and synagogues, in their homes, at conferences, in coffee shops, and elsewhere. These stories are a wellspring of joy. To watch people tell them is, to use a loaded phrase, to see them born again, to see them re-animated and re-encharmed with the possibility of life. For people of widely diverse backgrounds,

these stories stand as reminders of our capacity for depth of feeling and also as sources of genuine gratitude in the midst of a culture frequently numbed, despite its efforts at vibrancy. In the Book of Exodus, Moses tells Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘Let my people go.’”¹ Today, the Earth speaks these words to us, stuck unwittingly as we are in the midst of our own cultural traps. These spiritual experiences in nature, in a unique way, have the power to free us to become more truly human.

In addition to the fact that all people have these experiences, I’ve noticed that the words people use to describe them are either implicitly or explicitly religious. Following from this, a second reason that religious involvement in the environmental movement is important is that religious language, symbols and metaphor help people access and assimilate the power of these experiences.

Many people, for instance, describe these experiences and the natural world itself as a gift, implying the existence of a Compassionate Giver whose giving evokes a regenerative gratitude. Others speak of awe and wonder at creation’s raw splendor, speaking with uncharacteristic boldness about being convinced of a Mighty Creator’s existence through their experience of nature. Still others speak of a liberating sense of fear and humility in recognizing that they are small, and they use language that recalls the psalmist’s sense that “the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”²

The language of religion, in a broad, non-sectarian sense, can often be a genuine asset as people make sense of their experiences in nature – an asset that I have seen serve valuable purposes with people who range from traditionally observant to contemporary spiritual seekers. The environmental movement can be strengthened by attention to this language of gratitude, awe, humility and love. At their best, religious communities can provide one kind of home base where the broadly religious dimension of our experience of nature can be recognized and affirmed. And where the power of these experiences can be integrated into peoples’ conscious identities.

This is certainly not to imply that religious communities are the only places where we can find language powerful enough to affirm and liberate our love for the earth. Poets, artists and others speak,

¹ Exodus 5:1

² Psalm 111:10

write and create in ways that reflect a deep knowledge of the earth and human moods in relation to it – language and modes of communication that pulse with life of their own. Religion, however, is a place where many people turn to engage and make sense of the most important experiences of their lives. As such, it is an important partner for the environmental movement in its efforts to reconnect people with the earth.

The language of religion, in a broad, non-sectarian sense, can often be a genuine asset as people make sense of their experiences in nature – an asset that I have seen serve valuable purposes with people who range from traditionally observant to contemporary spiritual seekers.

So far, I have focused on the positive impacts of these experiences on the human soul, and the usefulness of religion to help us integrate the power of these experiences into our lives. There are two other important dimensions here. First, if engaged consciously, these experiences strengthen our bond with the natural world, helping us learn to love the earth. In an effort to assert this sense of relatedness as a basis for the social ethic of sustainability, Thomas Berry has written, “The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.”³ In a 2002 interview in the *New York Times*, Professor Daniel Botkin of the University of California, Santa Barbara, said:

We will not attain sustainability until we learn to love both nature and people. To love nature you have to make a deep connection with it. If more Americans felt connected to nature they would feel a bigger stake in policies that cut resource consumption.⁴

The spiritual experiences of millions of people, experiences too often unexplored, are the fertile soil from which this sense of human

³ Berry, Thomas and Tucker, Mary Evelyn. *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community*. Sierra Club Books, 2006.

⁴ Dreifus, Claudia. *Managing Planet Earth: A Conversation with Daniel Botkin/ Adjusting Attitudes on Energy to Keep Our Favorite Things*. *New York Times*. August 20, 2002.

relatedness to the earth can arise. Our ability to feel a relationship of care with the earth is a critical requisite for the growth of a sustainable society. Engaging people's spiritual experiences of nature is important, then, for multiple reasons. This engagement promotes human spiritual well-being. It supports a reawakening of a compassionate relationship with creation. These deepened sensibilities then provide the opportunity for an ethos of sustainability to arise, an ethos that is based not only on law and social mores, but also on love.

The spiritual experiences of millions of people, experiences too often unexplored, are the fertile soil from which this sense of human relatedness to the earth can arise.

There is one other value to the sensibilities these stories evoke. Giving priority to this language of joy, gratitude, awe and humility is not simply a matter of spiritual liberation, a means to strengthen our bonds with the earth, or a foundation for environmental sustainability. For the environmental movement, it is also a matter of narrative survival.

Too often, the environmental movement's narrative lacks hope and a positive vision, and resorts instead to dreary, scoldingly moralistic apocalypticism. Look over the communications material of many major environmental groups, and what you see, what you feel, is catastrophe – actual, impending, or both. The basic narrative of the environmental movement is that there is a disaster in progress, that we must respond radically and immediately, and that perhaps it is too late.

This message – at least the first two thirds of it - is certainly true on a scientifically objective level. There is no question, for instance, that global warming is in the process of wreaking havoc on the web of creation and causing massive preventable suffering and destruction. Let me be clear that I do not mean to suggest otherwise. However, from the perspective of a narrative strategy, clergy know that it is difficult to motivate one's followers solely by sharing bad news. Wise spiritual teachers know that the best way to promote change is to offer hope and vision in addition to sounding the alarm. Environmental

leaders can learn from great religious movements like the abolition movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and others. They can learn that promoting change requires a positive vision, a vision that in this case will connect people to the earth at the level of their deepest humanity.

Environmental leaders can learn from great religious movements like the abolition movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and others. They can learn that promoting change requires a positive vision, a vision that in this case will connect people to the earth at the level of their deepest humanity.

This, in many ways, was the *modus operandi* of most early environmental writers. Read Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, David Thoreau or others and you cannot escape a sense of wonder and a rousing wake-up call. The sadness is there, as is the anger and disappointment with our culture's mistreatment of the earth. Before the anger, however, underneath the disappointment and activism, there is an immersion in joy, a baptism in earth-based wonder, and a clear call to action. Too often, today's environmental professionals have forgotten to invoke this heritage and its life-giving sensibility as they communicate. What's left behind is a rigid, frightened litany of horrors and, as a result, people are immobilized by despair. If we want people truly to know how awful our treatment of the earth is, if we want the environmental movement to flourish, we must reconnect people to their love and gratitude for earth first. Everything else can follow; without this connection, we risk creating a future that is as joyless as the present is fearsome.

CONSUMPTION, STEWARDSHIP, AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Gary Gardner is director of research at the Worldwatch Institute, a leading environmental think-tank in Washington DC. He tells this story.

Recently, I had a good friend visit me from out of town. We had invited him to stay the night at our home. He eats cereal for breakfast in the morning, which I do not, so before he arrived I went out to the grocery store to buy him a box of cereal.

I walked into the supermarket and then into the aisle where the cereals are displayed. I was stunned when I was faced with the huge array of breakfast cereals – many different brands and sizes. Out of curiosity I began to count, to see how many different types of cereal there were. I counted over 120 different brands and sizes, all on display in that one aisle.

This made me think. In my work, which focuses in part on Third World and global development and the environment, one of the operating assumptions is that a country becomes more developed when its citizens have more choices. The conventional thinking is that the more choices you have, the better off you are. This is obviously true in a number of important ways, but when I stood in that supermarket looking at the shelves of different breakfast cereals, I began to see that there were real limits to the truth of this understanding which links development, choice and consumption.

Then, I began to think about some of the most important choices I've made in my own life – choices about my job, my marriage, my family. I realized that when I chose my job, I didn't have 120 options – I had only a couple – and choosing from between this small number forced me to become clear about who I was and what kind of work I valued most. When I was choosing who to marry, I didn't have 120 options – I had one person that I chose, and committing to that single choice, over the years, has shaped me in deeply important ways. These experiences of limited choice have been some of the most important occasions for spiritual growth in my entire life. I wouldn't be the person I am today if I hadn't wrestled with these choices with very limited options.

THE LIMITS TO CONSUMPTION, THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

This story, like the Game Boy tale, is easily and widely recognizable. It is also a story, like the first one, that has both religious and environmental implications. In addressing one of our culture's shortcomings – a consuming commercialism that degrades soul, society and soil – it invites us to recognize another reason that religion

can be an important partner for the environmental movement. Both religious and environmental leaders believe that human individuals and cultures find well-being and a truly good life, not through the obsessive pursuit of material consumption, but rather through reverence offered to a greater power and through service offered to a wider community. The time has come for religious and environmental leaders to find common language and to develop shared strategies to make it clear that human restraint in relation to the earth is necessary for human survival, flourishing, and genuine happiness.

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In traditional religious spheres, reverence has been divinely focused and the wider community has included vulnerable members of the human community – the poor, the marginalized, the sick and suffering, the imprisoned and the dying. For environmentalists, reverence has often been nature-focused with citizens of the wider community including plant and animal life and earth itself. Now, as religious communities discover the environment as a point of focus, they are increasingly joining environmental leaders to address First World consumption as a moral and environmental issue.

CAPITALISM, RELIGION, AND THE EARTH

Let me offer a basic narrative on First World consumption to illuminate this opportunity. And let me start by acknowledging capitalism's tangible benefits and material blessings. My aim here is not to condemn capitalism, but rather to argue that the manner in which it is currently practiced, the rules it has drawn to govern its own operation, and the single-minded narrowness with which it has too often bound itself to its goals, are environmentally ruinous and must be changed.

Consumer capitalism today holds out the prospect of fulfillment and well-being, a vision of a good life, through ever-increasing material consumption, consumption dependent on the use of natural resources for their manufacture and transport. This, as many have observed, is a quasi-religious system. It offers a vision of how one achieves ultimate well-being (consuming), educational/motivational resources that seek to elicit belief in this system's claims (advertising), the methods for pursuing consumption (cash or credit), and even shrines (shopping malls). What's more, consumer capitalism is an extremely powerful system. Consumer capitalist societies mobilize many of their best minds and extensive human and financial resources on behalf of increasing material consumption. The impact of the corporate sector in developed countries generally rivals or outstrips the power of the society's governmental or civil sectors.

RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO CAPITALISM

This narrative is unacceptable from both religious and environmental perspectives. From a religious view, several problems emerge immediately. First, no religion teaches that life's purpose is material consumption and accumulation. Counter to this, religions hold that life's true value, and human beings' deepest fulfillment, can be found in response to the call of God. Every religion demonstrates that deep religious commitment may in fact call followers into counter-cultural stances that place them at odds with the wealthy and powerful on behalf of society's dispossessed, or in support of values not in vogue. This is an obvious reason that consumer capitalism as currently practiced cannot be comfortably reconciled with a religious approach to life.

Secondly, religious leaders have recognized for centuries that capitalism, with its tendency to classify human effort and natural resources as commodities, requires regulation and safeguards to prevent it from spoiling its own nest or mistreating its workers. Capitalism's history, with all its successes, has a dark side; labor and environmental leaders know this better than most. Religious leaders too have recognized that the capitalist urge can become, like any system, a fundamentalist one, rejecting even wise restrictions on its practice. With their long-standing commitment to human rights and

the well-being of the poor, religious leaders have been active in efforts ranging from the local to the global, offering support to those who suffer from capitalism's shortcomings and advocating for a better life for society's most vulnerable communities.

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Many religions also teach that one mark of spiritual maturity, whether on an individual or social level, is demonstrated through wise restraint in relation to the material world. In past centuries, these teachings were often expressed through spiritual practices designed to increase people's spiritual and moral strength. A common religious practice such as fasting, for example, has traditionally been intended to teach that humanity "does not live by bread alone," to serve as a reminder of our creatureliness and as an aid to a genuine humility. Or consider the Jewish custom of Sabbath observance, which sets aside a day each week during which people and animals are to abstain from work and to participate in the celebration, recognition and worship of God. These customs and others have served through the centuries as a religious reminder that our attachment to the material world is to be animated by and structured in response to our relationship with God. These kinds of spiritual practices, found in all religions around the world, are intended to free the human soul from false attachments – to set it truly free.

While these spiritual practices have traditionally served as aids to human spiritual growth, they can often be re-interpreted, given a new layer of meaning, in relation to the environment. For instance, fasting could be understood both as a discipline that strengthens the bond between God and the soul and as a practice that raises our awareness and gratitude for earth's sustenance of human life. Sabbath observance could be understood in similar ways, both as a practice

that strengthens the human-divine relationship and that ritualizes, through abstinence from work and excessive consumption, a weekly gesture of respect for the earth. These practices can support increased social awareness and solidarity around issues of environmental care. In addition to influencing individual behavior, they could also shape the social consciences of people from religious traditions around the globe. In drawing new meaning out of ancient practices, religious leaders can remind us that the relationship between human beings and the material world is not simply an issue of consumer choice but rather an arena of moral and spiritual significance.

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRITIQUE AND A “STEWARDSHIP” ALLIANCE

From an environmental perspective, the problems of capitalism are well-recognized. Current capitalist economies in the First World cause severe environmental threats, polluting air, water and soil while destroying life and habitat on a massive scale. Emerging consumer cultures in countries such as India and China will add billions of new consumers to the ranks of their First World peers, multiplying these problems. The scientific community has articulated a widespread consensus that our current relationship with earth’s ecosystems, a relationship increasingly dictated by consumer capitalism, is unsustainable.

In the midst of these problems, the environmental community has had the courage to announce the troubling news that if we want to preserve life and secure a future for human civilization, we will have to respect necessary limits to our use of earth’s resources. While this does not imply that capitalism per se must be replaced (remember the environmental destruction wrought by many communist regimes), it

does clearly mean that the way we practice capitalism must be overhauled.

Religious and environmental leaders working together can comprise one of the most important and powerful coalitions on behalf of changing the shape of capitalism. These two communities have an opportunity for partnership around the religious theme of stewardship, and its ecological counterpart, sustainability. The most famous definition of sustainability, from the United Nations' Brundtland Commission report in 1987, offers a foundation around which this partnership can be built. Defining sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," the Commission sounded a note that continues to resonate in environmental circles. Additionally, it has created opportunities for many business leaders to rally around a commitment to capitalism as a force for both economic growth and environmental healing. For instance, when British Petroleum re-branded itself as "Beyond Petroleum," it catalyzed public imagination about the future importance – environmentally and economically – of renewable energy.

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The word "stewardship" is often used to define a religious engagement with the concept of sustainability. Religious articulations of "stewardship" normally include three themes. First, God, not humanity is the rightful owner of creation. From this perspective we cannot do whatever we want to the earth because it does not belong to us. Second, human beings are responsible for caring for the earth, for stewarding it according to God's interests, not our own. This assertion of human responsibility and power strikes many as dangerously anthropocentric. I would suggest that, like it or not, it is a realistic appraisal of our decisive impact on the planet.

A third aspect of many definitions of stewardship speaks to the issue of accountability and judgment. Religious traditions hold that

we are responsible to God for the manner in which we carry out our stewardship. Poor stewardship of the planet, as increasing numbers of religious leaders are articulating, is morally wrong. This ecological sin has a two-pronged trajectory. It is wrong because it inflicts suffering and destruction on current members of the community of creation, with the greatest impact falling on the most vulnerable communities – human and beyond-human. Ecological sin is also wrong because it inflicts suffering on and diminishes life for future generations. This two-pronged focus is characteristic of an understanding of the moral wrong of environmental destruction shared by people from a wide range of religious backgrounds.

STEWARDSHIP AS A RELIGIOUS-ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE

If a first pillar of a religious-environmental partnership revolves around themes of spirituality, a second pillar revolves around themes of sustainability and stewardship. Religious and environmental leaders have a significant opportunity to provide leadership in a growing global conversation about constructing a realistic and ecologically considerate concept of a good life. These conversations must also address the issues of human consumption and our relationship with the earth.

If a first pillar of a religious-environmental partnership revolves around themes of spirituality, a second pillar revolves around themes of sustainability and stewardship.

Clearly, billions of people in the developing world must consume more to have a decent life.⁵ Equally as clearly, developed countries must dramatically reduce the size of their collective ecological footprint. Environmental leaders have been at the forefront of the latter conversation for decades; religious leaders have offered leadership in relation to the former for millennia. Together, the religious and environmental communities have an opportunity to offer a life-saving vision about what a good life looks like from the

⁵ In a speech at the Wharton Economic Summit on February 1, 2006, Dr. Jeremy Siegel explained “It is estimated that 86.6% of the global population resides in developing nations but only 44% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).” <http://www.upenn.edu/gazette/0506/gazo5.html>.

perspective of the human race and the entire planet – a vision organized around themes of environmental sustainability and stewardship.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: A NATURAL CONNECTION

Ana Baptista is a Ph.D. candidate at Rutgers University in New Jersey. She grew up in Newark, New Jersey's Ironbound section, a predominantly immigrant working-class neighborhood that suffers from a range of environmental health threats.

Growing up in the Ironbound neighborhood in Newark, I experienced firsthand the impacts of environmental injustice. Although I felt a great sense of pride for my hardworking, diverse community I could never shake a sense of resentment about the degraded conditions we lived in – the abandoned dump sites, foul odors, lack of green space. When we'd take school trips to the suburbs, I was shocked at how pristine everything looked and thought to myself – are my classmates and I not worthy of this as well? At the time I didn't know these issues were central to environmental justice; I just wanted to be part of something that could improve conditions in my community. I was heavily involved in the leadership of my local Catholic Youth Group where environmental issues were not considered much by city kids. The environment was some foreign hippy issue – but in the context of social justice, service and compassion, I found I could rally my friends into action through clean ups and other local activities.

As a teenager I joined my first protests of hazardous waste incinerators and I haven't stopped since. I started my academic career dedicated to traditional studies in ecology, which later evolved into an interest in public policy and urban studies. The problems I experienced in Ironbound, I realized, were not just the product of isolated issues in our community or mere physical problems related to local industries but were the result of economic, social and political problems facing communities like Ironbound throughout the world.

My journey has brought me full circle. I am completing my doctorate at Rutgers University's School of Planning and Policy focused on environmental justice policy development and working part time as an environmental justice coordinator for the same organization that first invited me to join the incinerator protests as a teenager – Ironbound Community Corp. I still try to channel those youthful feelings of anger

into activism based on compassion for members of my community and a deep sense of justice.

While all people suffer from environmental degradation, research has demonstrated conclusively that communities of color and poor communities suffer a disproportionate burden, a pattern that is known as “environmental racism” or “environmental injustice.” A 1987 report by the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice was one early study which confirmed this ugly reality, demonstrating that there was a strong, positive correlation between the ethnicity of a community and its poverty level (in that order), and the toxicity of its environment. Two decades later, in February of 2007, the United Church of Christ’s Justice and Witness Ministries published *Toxic Wastes and Race at 20 – 1987-2007*, a follow-up research report which concluded that there had been no meaningful changes in these trends.

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It is widely recognized that pollution degrades the natural world. As Ana’s story and the research identifies, pollution also degrades the human environment, and raises issues of social justice. This is a third reason that the environmental movement can benefit from an alliance with the religious community. For millennia, all of the world’s great religious traditions have had a commitment to social justice embedded deeply within their sacred texts, traditions, and communal practices. For equal lengths of time, these traditions have demonstrated repeatedly that they can mobilize significant numbers of their followers behind efforts to create a just society.

SOCIAL JUSTICE – A POWERFUL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Understanding the environment as an issue of social justice would provide a morally legitimate and familiar framework in relation to an

unfamiliar area of concern for millions of religious people. However, the points of connection between traditional issues of social justice and the environment are either not clearly understood or prioritized either by religious or environmental leaders. For the most part, religious institutions have not addressed environmental racism despite considerable investments in a wide range of other issues of social justice. And while the environmental movement has made important contributions in relation to the urban environment and environmental health, most major environmental leaders do not invest heavily in publicizing or addressing the link between pollution, race, and poverty.

This creates a problem for the environmental movement in relation to engaging broad religious support. On one hand, a large U.S. religious community, generally speaking, does not understand environmental degradation as a moral wrong, an injustice, though it simultaneously invests substantial resources in the pursuit of a just society. On the other hand, the environmental community often fails to highlight the ways in which environmental degradation creates and exacerbates social injustice. As a result, tragically, a tremendous opportunity lies unaddressed.

OUT OF MIND MEANS OUT OF SIGHT – WHY THE MINDSET MATTERS

I have spoken with hundreds of people from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds, comparing the conceptual frameworks they use to understand the issue of poverty with their understanding of the environment. Members of religious communities almost uniformly understand poverty as a moral issue, an issue of social justice. Theological and moral language regarding poverty is widely understood in diverse religious communities, as is religious action in response. While people also understand poverty as an issue with political and economic dimensions, the moral framework is most powerful.

One could certainly summon evidence to argue that this moral framework, while widespread, has not translated into strong U.S. anti-poverty policies. That, however, is not my point. Poverty is inextricably linked in the minds of millions of people with a condition

that is morally wrong and unjust. This mental framework legitimizes and supports an extensive religious response.

Religious institutions undertake a range of anti-poverty initiatives, understanding these initiatives to be an expression of their core mission. These responses include job training programs, education and tutoring efforts, affordable housing initiatives, drug and alcohol treatment programs, homeless sheltering, advocacy and legal action, living wage campaigns, and other social programs. These programs create a self-reinforcing, virtuous cycle of religious engagement in the fight to eliminate poverty. By bringing religious people into personal contact with the effects of poverty on communities and individuals, these initiatives result in concrete acts of service and advocacy, and connect people of faith with the suffering and pain poverty causes. By volunteering in a shelter or a soup kitchen, thousands of people of diverse faiths have been reminded of their connection to their fellow human beings and their moral responsibility to help.

While religious responses have obviously not been society's only responses to these critical issues, religion's response has been substantial and has made a significant difference. For example, religious leadership played a decisively important role during the Civil Rights era. Without religious support the development of low-income housing would have proceeded at a much slower pace. Religious efforts to address poverty are ubiquitous and diverse, and grow out of the religious community's understanding of poverty as a moral issue.

In comparison, my experience is that within religious institutions, people's mental frameworks for understanding the environment differ significantly. For most people, the environment is primarily a political issue, and secondarily an economic issue. Rarely do people articulate an understanding of the environment as a moral issue, an issue of justice, until prompted to do so. The sole widespread exception, in my experience, is that many people feel a sense of moral guilt if they do not recycle. This absence of a theological framework depicting environmental issues as moral issues, issues of justice, lies behind the relative lack of religious engagement of the environmental movement. If an issue is not understood as an issue of justice, religious institutions have much less reason to invest their time or energy. For a majority of religious leaders, the link between environmental degradation and social justice is invisible. Without awareness of this

relationship, they lack the eyes to see our society's widespread environmental injustices.

Further, while many people of faith may have visited places of natural beauty, many fewer have visited sites of environmental devastation and injustice. As a result, very few religious leaders have had the kind of "conversion experience" that would empower them to become passionate advocates for a clean, healthy environment for all people.

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I have organized a number of "Environmental Health and Justice Tours" of blighted urban areas, taking ordained leaders, congregants and community members to toxic dumps, to Superfund sites, to polluted urban rivers, to incinerators and industrial sites often in the midst of crowded communities of color. For most people, even those living in these overburdened communities, this is the first time they have seen these sites with an eye to their social-environmental implications. When people hear stories of environmental injustice, when they see communities afflicted by asthma and riddled with toxic dump sites, they are genuinely moved – just as people are moved around issues of poverty when they volunteer in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Unfortunately, the number of religious leaders who have had such an exposure is statistically insignificant. There is, at present, little experiential basis and few opportunities for religious leaders to develop an understanding of and a commitment to the fight against environmental justice.

Imagine a different scenario. Imagine a world in which all ordained religious leaders take part in an Environmental Health and Justice Tour as part of their seminary training, supported by major environmental groups interested in educating these leaders about

environmental racism and injustice. Imagine if even half of all houses of worship took part in initiatives designed to create a safe, healthy environment for society's most vulnerable communities – initiatives ranging from urban tree planting to job training for brownfields redevelopment, from clean air advocacy to litigation aimed at cleaning up toxic dumps, from community organizing for increased urban parks to advocacy and education to eliminate lead poisoning as a health threat for urban children. As described above, religious groups have developed a wide range of responses to poverty. There is no reason that they cannot develop a similarly wide range of responses to environmental injustice.

In the end, protecting and preserving life, particularly the life within vulnerable, marginalized communities, is a fundamental religious commitment. Environmental protection is about protecting life; environmental justice is about protecting life in vulnerable human communities. To partner effectively with religious communities, the environmental movement will need to place a greater priority on environmental racism and injustice. Without such a focus, powerful religious energies on behalf of the environment will remain latent.

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ENGAGING US ALL IN THE PROCESS

In 2002, I left my work as a parish priest and began work as a religious-environmental activist. One of the first things I did, thanks to the encouragement of my board of directors, was attend the United Nations' Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. It was a powerful experience. I joined nearly 10,000 people who gathered from all over the planet for discussions and negotiations about two of the most pressing issues facing the human family. The first issue: how to create economic growth to lift the world's poorest 2 billion people, who survive on less than \$2 a day, out of crushing poverty into a better and more fulfilling life. The second issue: how to create this growth while protecting and restoring the earth, which supports all life. Day

after day, I saw passionate, intelligent, committed leaders leaning into these daunting issues, exploring their massive ramifications and potential solutions. The enormity of what was at stake became increasingly clear. After several days I began to feel that I was watching the future of human civilization being debated and negotiated.

Each day of the Summit, there was a different topic that was the focus of discussions. One day, for instance, the topic was water, another day energy, and so on. Every morning, to orient those attending, there was a roundtable discussion of experts on the day's topic. Their discussion was broadcast onto large video screens, so that everyone attending could listen in and develop some shared language.

These roundtable conversations were compelling and the diversity of people seated at these experts' roundtables truly wonderful. There were people from all possible locations throughout Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, small island states and the rest of the globe. To enhance the diversity further, there were people from every imaginable interest group including members of the business community, medical community, labor movement, women's groups, indigenous people's groups, and many more. The range of people and perspectives was genuinely encouraging and inspirational. These conversations seemed like a sign of hope, demonstrating that so many strong minds were committed to addressing these critical social and environmental issues.

Several days into the conference, one of the experts took the microphone and suggested that for a moment we all pause to recognize that every person who had a stake in the outcome of these negotiations and discussions had, in some representative way, a seat at the table and a voice in the conversation. Thirty or forty years ago, he said, that would not have been true – the voices of women, for example, would not have been so well represented. Thousands of people throughout the assembly hall nodded in agreement. He was recognizing something self-evident and good.

At that moment, the youth representative of the day, a young African woman of sixteen or seventeen, took the microphone and addressed the group. She said that in fact, those people who had the greatest stake in the outcome of these conversations had no seat at the table and no voice in the conversations whatsoever.

That was, she continued, because they were not yet alive.

I sat there, having served as a parish priest for a decade, and realized what I'd already known, but in a deeper way. From a religious perspective, we all live on an earth that is the gift of the boundless generosity of the Creator, a gift we did nothing to create, a gift that was in many ways beautifully formed before our species even came into existence. Our job is to take care of that gift for the wellbeing of all life, present and future.

From a religious perspective, we all live on an earth that is the gift of the boundless generosity of the Creator, a gift we did nothing to create, a gift that was in many ways beautifully formed before our species even came into existence. Our job is to take care of that gift for the wellbeing of all life, present and future.

A partnership between environmental and religious leaders is an indispensable part of fulfilling that responsibility. The three themes described in this essay – spirit, stewardship, and justice in relation to the Earth – offer a reliable map of the terrain that must be engaged for this partnership to reach its potential. Religion offers a tremendous potential asset to the environmental movement, and the environmental crisis offers religion a chance to make a new, deeply significant contribution to the life of the planet. May leaders in both communities seize the opportunity to unite for a common cause.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Reverend Fletcher Harper, an Episcopal priest, is Executive Director of GreenFaith, an interfaith environmental coalition based in New Jersey. An award-winning spiritual writer and nationally-recognized preacher on the environment, Harper preaches, teaches and speaks weekly at houses of worship from a wide range of denominations in New Jersey and beyond about the moral, spiritual basis for environmental stewardship and justice. A graduate of

Princeton University and Union Theological Seminary, Harper served as a parish priest for ten years and in leadership positions in the Episcopal Church prior to joining GreenFaith. GreenFaith was founded in 1992 as New Jersey's interfaith coalition for the environment. GreenFaith inspires, educates and mobilizes people of diverse spiritual backgrounds to deepen their relationship with nature and to take action for the earth.

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Canoncito at Apache Canyon: Coming to a Sense of Place

Holly YoungBear-Tibbetts, Dean of External Relations, College of Menominee Nation

SUMMARY

The sense of place is a vital component of the environmental movement. One must establish a foundation from which to expand while simultaneously recognizing all aspects of that foundation. With that comes a deeper appreciation for diversity and the complex relationships on which we rely. Establishing a sense of place is not just about considering and appreciating your surroundings, but about the environment as a whole. And that appreciation leads to action.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, environment, environmental movement, Santa Fe, New Mexico, sustainable development, College of Menominee Nation

Canoncito at Apache Canyon

Santa Fe, New Mexico

January 2007

Dear Friend:

Greetings from Canoncito. The pinions and junipers have finally discarded the snow of the “storm of the last half century” from their limbs, and ice on the walkways is grudgingly receding under the midday warmth of bright New Mexico skies. Canoncito is somewhat sheltered compared to other locales in North Central New Mexico, nestled against the west face of the Galisteo Mesa and ringed by the ridges of Apache Canyon. It provides a habitat to coyotes and the varmints that are their prey, wintering grounds for robins and other birds from the nearby Pecos and Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and to a scattering of humans – mostly of modest means – a home in the high desert country. I recently became a member of the last category, relocating from the Northwoods of the Upper Great Lakes to here in Canoncito, ten miles east of the City of Santa Fe.

My new home site, a small parcel of less than two acres, is fronted by the original Santa Fe Trail. The site and its surroundings are forested with juniper and pinion trees, too many now dead from attack by the invasive borer beetle, contributing excessive potential fuel in the event of fire. The understory of the forest is a mixture of grasses, cacti, and improbably, an incredible diversity of forbs and flowering plants that defy the drought and heat of August to light up the landscape. Chamisa and other bushy perennials ring every arroyo and roadway shoulder, securing the soil and providing shade and nourishment to the lizards and their cafeteria of spiders and insects, and a nuanced beauty to the otherwise subdued palette of the high desert.

At the rear of the property lies the canyon breach. Like most canyon landscapes, the passage has subsequently become a game trail, a roadway, and now a corridor for Amtrak service and Interstate Highway 25. The white noise of interstate traffic has decreased the value of real estate in Canoncito, making it more affordable in an otherwise inflated real estate market. In my mind, the low-volume undercurrent of passing vehicles is a small price to pay for the

privilege of living here. The occasional whistle of the Amtrak even evokes the sentimental and nostalgic sense of disturbed solitude that poets and lyricists have long popularized.

In short, it is a landscape layered with multiple levels of meanings and interpretations that geographers recognize as typical of landscapes we all occupy. It is habitat, to be sure, but it is also aesthetic – nature, health, history, artifact, an intricate ecological system, yes, even a problematic landscape, given climatic aridity and the compromised water quality of the entire Rio Grande watershed. Current realty prices confirm that one could also interpret it as a landscape of wealth, and the extensive National Forest Service and National Park holdings attest to its wealth as a public asset. It is also, however, a landscape of ideology and of making a place one's home. It is in respect to the latter two of these interpretations that I am most intrigued and why I have chosen to write a letter about the process of making a place one's home.

Some geographers have argued that all landscapes are ideological, reflecting implicit social philosophies, power relations, jurisdictional authorities, and other evidence of our collective consciousness. I suspect that such is the case. Further, I believe that when we come to a profound sense of place we must learn to accept that place on its own terms. In doing so, through examination and appreciation, we commit to making that place our home.

Learning to accept this place on its own terms has introduced me to an array of personal geographies and community experiences. I can examine the ideological landscape of Santa Fe and its environs to situate my community engagement, understand my neighbors, and identify with multiple communities of interest in Santa Fe.

I consider myself fortunate in this endeavor. Learning to accept this place on its own terms has introduced me to an array of personal geographies and community experiences. I can examine the ideological landscape of Santa Fe and its environs to situate my

community engagement, understand my neighbors, and identify with multiple communities of interest in Santa Fe. Perhaps a snapshot of the ideological landscape of Santa Fe will illustrate the point.

Touted as “The City Different,” Santa Fe is the core of the region. It boasts urban amenities uncharacteristic of a city of such modest size – just slightly over 65,000 residents. Over a dozen museums, and literally hundreds of galleries, have totally displaced what was formerly the downtown area. Native artisans who display and sell their jewelry in front of the Palace of the Governors, and the perhaps last dime store in the country, are all that predate the city’s 1920s conscious efforts to promote itself as an art market and visitor destination. There are high-end boutiques, purveyors of haute cuisine, and southwestern chic hotels that surround the plaza and cascade easterly to the Roundhouse, the state’s capital. The plaza and its environs are only one of the many Santa Fes that comprise this urban core. Locals may wander down to the plaza with friends, enjoy fiestas and market days that draw artists and their patrons, or relax with a Starbucks latte and people watch on a lazy Sunday morning, but it is clear that this Santa Fe is the Santa Fe for visitors.

The Santa Fe of everyday life, the affordable shops and big box stores, the grocery and hardware stores, are strung along the old Turquoise Trail in a panoply of strip malls. Last year the city council granted a zoning waiver to Wal-Mart, approving the construction of a super-center and transforming the City Different into the City Ordinary. Further south and west of this commercial corridor, distinctive neighborhoods are easily identifiable by their tract housing, vest pocket parks, specialty markets and mercados, and neighborhood centers. Despite being densely packed along the western plain, these clearly are neighborhoods with vibrancy and energy. This is the locals’ Santa Fe and it is clear that its residents have cultivated a sense of place.

A respectable distance away, gated, up-scale housing developments are conveniently clustered adjacent to the county’s well-appointed recreational complex – a complex that includes equestrian trails, tennis courts, and a professionally designed golf course. In some respects, despite their apparent affluence, these are the most forlorn of Santa Fe neighborhoods. One senses that these are properties rather than homes. Occupied, but not lived in McMansions for the affluent

Anglo long-term transient citizenry that the new West seems to attract. To read the ideological landscape of Santa Fe is to read an ideological paradox. Lauded for its cultural diversity with nearly equivalent numbers of Hispanic, Anglo, and Native citizens, the landscape reveals how little interaction there exists between the three cultural groups.

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Santa Fe's urban American Indian population is widely dispersed and unlike many cities has no discernible "asphalt rez." The region's native population is overwhelmingly concentrated in the eight nearby pueblo communities. However, urban Indian residential preferences appear to reflect socio-economic status to a greater extent than they do tribal affiliation, location preferences, or access to community services and facilities. Santa Fe may be one of the few cities in the United States where urban Indians can live unobtrusively and free from the harassment and stigma that characterize so many of the urban Indian centers of population. This is an attractive option for retired native professors, aspirant actors, and community activists. The Institute of American Indian Art provides a touchstone community, and the community events sponsored by Institute provide an opportunity for urban Indian community interactions. While there may be little interaction among the three primary cultural groups, there is a higher level of tolerance for and appreciation of cultural diversity than in most urban areas.

Santa Fe has a small and highly dispersed African American population. This was addressed in a recent issue of the local weekly newspaper, *The Reporter*, in an article entitled, "Black Like Me." The author wrote of the cultural isolation she experienced in Santa Fe and wondered where the other 500 African American Santa Feans might

be located. That highly emotive article suggests that while tolerance is a blessing, we all need some cultural touchstone to feel connected – to find those that laugh at the same jokes, enjoy the same food or music or share comparable experiences. It's an interesting paradox – the blessing of a tolerant community can also be isolating. Who knows, perhaps the residents of the McMansions have found – if only temporarily – an enclave that enriches their lives.

The periphery of the region in Santa Fe County is in many ways as culturally and economically divided as in the city. In addition to the pueblos, some villages and hamlets are wholly comprised of a single (often extended families) cultural and economic cooperative. Driving through those communities, one feels rather than sees the eyes peering behind the curtain. In some parts of the county, lifestyle preferences are evident – the horsey crowd in one are. Gratefully, Canoncito is a much more eclectic community, and while I certainly appreciate the urban amenities that Santa Fe offers, my own landscape preference was best realized by the little home site in Canoncito. Here I have spectacular topography, privacy in the pinions, a diverse community of neighbors, and adequate elbow room. The exurb of Eldorado is easily accessible, and although I will likely be the only non-Anglo not wearing a service worker's uniform, I can utilize its small grocery store, gas station, banking facilities, and other conveniences without traveling into the city. It is here that I have determined to make my home, and I am privileged to share the experience of my diverse community with neighbors who have, like me, committed to make this place their home.

Humbled by the *long* duress of my Pueblo neighbors, I listen carefully to their stories, observations, and cosmologies. In them, I learn much of the complex sets of relationships that mark the human and ecological interactions of life on the high desert, and in that way better learn to be present in this place. The large Hispanic community of the region is another source of information and inspiration. It serves as a salient reminder of the wisdom that diversity is as enduring and valuable *within* communities as it is *among* communities. Each piece of the mosaic that is the "Hispanic" community in North Central New Mexico provides me with insights into the process of making this one's home, and I value that.

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The Anglo community of the canyon region is commensurately diverse, and perhaps characteristic of that of North Central New Mexico overall. It is an eccentric mix of people: residents of a decade or more who now consider themselves “old timers;” country squires with five acres of land, a manufactured home and a two horses; aspirant – and some very successful – celebrities and actors whom we Santa Feans pride ourselves on ignoring in public; condominium developers eager to market “the Enchantment” and their semi-retired boomer clientele; spiritual seekers and healers of every imaginable salvation strategy; and of course, the artists.

While we have an abundance of talented Native and Hispanic artists, it is the Anglo art community that predominates, and one garners the impression that every Anglo in the greater Santa Fe region is either a gallery owner or an artist – some even so successful that they have been able to give up their “day job.” Some, but far too few, of the Anglo community have chosen to make this place not only their residence but also their home. To the extent that they have made this commitment, their experiences offer valuable insights into that process, and I have valued those who have shared their experiences with me. That said, my observation to date is that most will remain merely residents – some only seasonally, most tied to other people in other places and unprepared to plant their two feet firmly on this high desert landscape. Many wear their rootlessness as visibly as their too-chic western gear, their readiness to move on to the next supposedly wonderful location, and their devotion to the artifices – which are as abundant as the arts – of ‘Santa Fe style.’

While there is abundant ethnic diversity and an interesting mix of human communities, ethnicity is only one dimension of the multiple and diverse perspectives that mark the greater Santa Fe community. Here on nearly every street corner is another nonprofit organization – each dedicated to some unique aspect of assuring community sustainable development. Alternative energy enthusiasts, food sovereignty workers, ecological restoration buffs, and various organizations committed to social justice, community health and wellness abound. Although the areas of interest and activity are diverse, this vital sector of community life shares one common touchstone – a commitment to this place.

Because I have made the commitment to make this place my home, I am in the mode of ‘discovery’ daily, and that is a personal delight. My initial goal was to orient myself with the cosmos. Having relocated 10 degrees closer to the equator and some 15 degrees west of my former home, I wondered how those changes in geographic location would alter my perspective of the night skies. Here on nights that are typically clear, the entire Milky Way reveals its splendor. Though I can pick out a few old friends among the constellations, I find them at different angles above the horizon, and I am tracking their locations while now making the acquaintance of other stars more visible at this lower latitude. While the fun of amateur astronomy is a newfound preoccupation aided by my \$5.00 purchase of a used copy of *Astronomy For Dummies*, the bulk of my learning occurs during the daylight hours.

The natural landscape of Canoncito is a sharp contrast to my former home in the Northwoods. Soil, air, quality of sunlight, topography, forest and land cover species are all dramatically different, inviting investigation and exploration. Aside from a crabapple tree and domesticated rose bushes planted by a former owner, the only other plant on the property with which I am familiar is the wretched locust. It has proven as intrusive and difficult to remove from the high desert as was it in the Upper Great Lakes.

Because the land and the ground cover are distinct from other ecological regions, the high desert offers habitat to distinctive avian communities, including the rare Eldorado subspecies of the Mountain Blue Bird, Red-tailed hawks, Nuthatches, and Pinyon jays. Last week I caught my first sighting of a Road Runner, the fabled State Bird of New Mexico and favorite of cartoon devotees, idly standing on a patch

of open ground where the snow had receded near my house. The size of the bird, a hen was startling, and given the striations in her coat, and the absence of a topknot comb I was unsure of what indeed I was seeing. A visiting neighbor and adherent of New Age notions informed me that it was a Road Runner, and that my sighting was an auspicious omen. When the hen had meandered away – a very unexpected gait according to my cartoon indoctrination – I went outside to examine her tracks, so that in the future I could note her visits. She had taken a few steps across the snow, the trail of her long tail incising a line directly between her foot tracks. I wondered at her presence in the midst of this unseasonably cold and snowy winter, and vowed to learn more of the nesting habits and domestic life of this symbolic neighbor.

Collared lizards, jackrabbits, coyotes, and some burrowing critters have made the occasional visit to the home site. A lizard, apparently lured by the interior light of an empty stoneware container, was unable to later scale the interior wall of the pot and was inadvertently held captive for a few days. Finally, I noticed his dilemma and laid the pot on its side enabling him to make an escape. In his wake, I would observe what one might delicately refer to as lizard “sign.” To paraphrase the old powwow joke, while previously “I didn’t know shit about lizards,” I now have some scant – or scat – knowledge.

While I have chosen to playfully introduce the topic of scat, in some regards its presence on the high desert is anything but amusing. Mouse scat in the high desert carries the deadly Hanta virus, and the parasites of the mice of the high desert are carriers of the Black Plague virus, annually taking a half dozen to a dozen human lives in north Central New Mexico.

I share these personal stories not only because it is in these everyday, commonplace experiences that we make a place our home, but as a reminder also, that every environment has its risks and rewards, its resources and resistances, and that these too are a part of what it means to accept a landscape on its own terms, whether or not it is a preferred landscape.

We all hold specific landscape preferences, yet few of us are fortunate enough to be able to make our homes in such favored spots, and perhaps the greater tragedy is that too few of us are able to make the genuine commitment to make any place our home. Not only is it

the most highly charged commitment one can make in that realm wherein the personal is political, but it is also an affirmation to be present in the moment. So, what does any of this have to do with sustainable development and the critical issue of diversity within the ranks of the growing movement of advocates of sustainable development?

We all hold specific landscape preferences, yet few of us are fortunate enough to be able to make our homes in such favored spots, and perhaps the greater tragedy is that too few of us are able to make the genuine commitment to make any place our home.

Simply said, sustainable development will remain merely a rhetorical construct and literacy device for under-funded academics and would-be spokespersons unless we make a commitment to make this place our home. I'm perfectly willing to accept the concept of "home" at any scale of interpretation you choose, ranging from my home site in Canoncito or yours wherever you will make that commitment. If we are genuine in our commitment to the process of sustainable development, this is a most critical step. Deciding to make this place our home will guide our decision-making, inform our institutional missions, political sensibilities, civic organizations, economies, and selection of technologies. That commitment will sharpen our acuity to and relationship with the natural environment, prompt us to better steward our territories and jurisdictions, and shape our individual human perceptions, activities, and behaviors. Without that commitment, and the political will that it implies, we will only grasp at the straws of innovations. Given, our individual commitments to make a place our home will lead to a new ideological landscape of balance between the dynamic and interactive influences of our relationship to place. We will all benefit from a well-considered and prudent balance of the economic, social, and environmental factors, and perhaps ensure a legacy of a tenable home for future generations. The first and most critical step in the pledge to

sustainable development is to attend to our own sense of place, and to make that place our home.

Simply said, sustainable development will remain merely a rhetorical construct and literacy device for under-funded academics and would-be spokespersons unless we make a commitment to make this place our home.

The sense of place and commitment to making our home to which I'm referring is substantially more than residing at an address, camping out – however extravagantly – in some locale where employment or other opportunities exist, or enjoying a personal affinity to a specific space. Perhaps I can best describe it by borrowing a phrase from my Maori friends who express the complexity of this commitment as *turangnawaewae* “a place for one's feet to stand.” In its multiple meanings, *turangawaewae* is not only a territorial and political referent, but also a positioning of intellect and philosophy. It is a term that autochthonous (indigenous, native to a place) cultures understand inherently and exhibit often, and precisely what I refer to when I use the phrase “commitment to make a place one's home.” In that process, we must embrace the wealth of diversity and perspectives of those who have also made the same commitment to place. Autochthons and other place-based communities have long known and culturally embedded the respect for and reliance on diverse perspectives. In part, the wisdom of *turangawaewae* and comparable cultural constructs is premised on the acknowledged value of diversity of perspectives. Cultural protocols and practices bolster the understanding of that value and assure appropriate interactions and communication among diverse perspectives.

Among those autochthonous cultures there are authoritative voices in the process of sustainable development, and its dependence on the commitment to making a place one's home. The Menominee Nation, with whom I've had the privilege of working for the past decade, are universally acknowledged as a community dedicated to the tenets of sustainable development and for their stewardship of their forested

ancestral homelands over countless millennia. They provide philosophic perspectives by which we can interrogate our own sensibilities, challenge our assumptions, recognize the benefits of diversity within as well as diversity among the members of our human communities. Indigenous wisdom, place-based knowledge, democratized decision-making, and devotion to the principles of equity along with a willingness to be present in the moment are the contributions we garner from the growing diversity of the community of advocacy to sustainable development.

Deciding to make this place our home will guide our decision-making, inform our institutional missions, political sensibilities, civic organizations, economies, and selection of technologies. That commitment will sharpen our acuity to and relationship with the natural environment, prompt us to better steward our territories and jurisdictions, and shape our individual human perceptions, activities, and behaviors.

Well, thanks for letting me share my perspectives in this overly long letter, and I look forward to hearing from you, as you too go about the satisfying work of making a place your home.

Best regards,
Holly YoungBear-Tibbetts

P.S. As letters customarily do not include footnotes, I include this postscript for those readers who would like more information on the themes discussed above. The various perspectives of ordinary landscapes are drawn from D.W. Meinig's "The Beholding Eye," in *Interpretations of Ordinary Landscapes*. Dennis Cosgrove is the geographer who has most adamantly argued that all landscapes are ideological texts, and interested readers will want to review his many articles on that subject. See especially his contributions in *Place/Culture/Representation*, edited by David Ley. A particularly deft illustration of the deployment of a landscape metaphor as an ideological symbol is Kenneth Olwig's *Nature's Ideological Landscape*.

While there is a growing and eclectic literature on sense of place, my two personal favorites remain Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* and *Topophilia*.

Printed works featuring Native cosmologies, particularly in respect to the Dine', Apache, and Pueblo communities of New Mexico, are abundant and diverse and cover a variety of topics. Many are cutesy and not very reliable, and some intrude into areas of theology that are likely inappropriate for the casual reader. The best resources for the interested reader are the publications produced by the Native nations themselves, and usually available directly from the tribal or band government. A number of Native nations in New Mexico have now produced their own annotated atlases. I have particularly benefited from the publications of *The Navajo Atlas* and *The Zuni Atlas*, both published by University of Oklahoma Press, for their designation of migration and trade trails, specific sites of early occupancy, hunting and gathering ranges, and hydrological and geological features. For an exhaustive review of the colonial forces at play and the impact on native nations of the region, the classic and most substantial text remains *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds*. The 'First American Revolution' – Pope's Rebellion against the Spanish in 1680 – has at long last received treatment by native scholars from the Pueblo communities, in a new volume commemorating the 2004 installation of a sculpture of Pope – the only statue created by a native artist – as New Mexico's second statue in the Hall of States statuary exhibit in the Rotunda of the Nation's Capitol. That volume, *Pope and the First American Revolution*, is most easily obtained directly from the publisher, Clear Light Publishing, Santa Fe. For a glimpse into Pueblo cosmologies, I find the poetry of Simon Ortiz a lovely window through which to better view indigenous perspectives of this place. For an example of the continued Pueblo commitment to sustainable development, see *Toward Balanced Development* which provides a case study of the Pojaque Pueblo's development of the Poeh Center as an example of a culturally premised, environmentally sensitive, and economically sound development project. For examples of the multiplicity of "sustainable development" interests and organizations in the Santa Fe region, see *Sustainable Santa Fe*, an annual resource directory available through the Chamber of Commerce and local nongovernmental organizations.

For my understanding of *turangwaewae*, I am indebted to the many Maori iwi of Aotearoa who embraced me during my visits to their home, and to my colleagues at the Departments of Geography and Maori Studies, Waikato and Auckland Universities.

For information about community-based surface fire management and forest restoration of the bosques, juniper-pinion and ponderosa pine forests of public and tribal lands in New Mexico, contact the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program of the U.S. Forest Service, Albuquerque, NM, Office of State and Private Forestry. The reading of the ideological landscape of Santa Fe and the rant about place and making a home are of course my own perspectives, and I take full responsibility for them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Holly YoungBear-Tibbitts serves as Dean of External Relations at the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin. Previously, she served for eight years as the Director of the Sustainable Development Institute at the College. In addition to developing its academic programs, she convened the Institute's first international conference, "Sharing Indigenous Wisdom: An International Dialogue on Sustainable Development," and was the principal architect of the College's Center for First Americans Forestlands, a collaborative project of the Institute and five divisions of the U.S. Forest Service.

She was appointed to serve on the Congressionally-mandated Biomass Research and Development Task Force of the U.S. Departments of Energy and Agriculture from 2001-04 and in 2005 was appointed by the governor of Wisconsin to the state's Bio-Industry Council. Her research interest in native lands and resources and their sustainable development are reflected in journal articles, books, and monographs. Her recent scholarship includes native land issues in North America and the Antipodes and environmental risks to women, children and native communities.

Holly YoungBear-Tibbitts received her Ph.D. in Geography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has extensive professional experience in planning, program design and development in addition to her experience in higher education. She is the recipient of awards and fellowships from the Council on Institutional Cooperation, the Bush Foundation, and The John T. and Katherine D. MacArthur Foundation.

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The Innovation of Diversity

*John “Jeff” R. Cook, Jr., Founder and former President,
The Environmental Careers Organization*

SUMMARY

While there are many reasons for diversity work, there is a strong business case for this important enterprise. The challenges of diversity are demanding the environmental movement to be more innovative, effective and legitimate by broadening its agenda, perspectives, impact and talent. This article outlines simple elements of a business case and recommendations to start.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, environmental movement, business case, recommendations, leadership, innovation

In the late 1980s, the Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) was asked by several of its sponsoring agencies, companies, organizations and foundations to address the under-representation of people of color in its intern programs and the environmental movement in general. Little did we know, this request would start us on a journey of learning – of mistakes and adjustments, of meeting new people and leaders, and of improving our mission and delivery of services. This journey continues to this day.

So, why did a small “careers” organization decide to commit to this diversity work when so many others were not? Yes, it was the “right” thing to do although there were high risks and limited rewards. Yes, some of our key customers were asking us to explore the work, but even more were asking why we were investing our energies in this way. One national foundation even told us that diversity was no longer a problem because they had just finished a five-year grant cycle addressing the issue! The answer to this question is simple.

With the benefit of hindsight that an article of this kind permits, we can confidently argue that our diversity work makes us a better organization. We function better because we are more open to new ideas and new ways to serve our mission and our constituents. We have a new supply of creative and energetic talent for our internships, staff and board. We have accessibility to new agencies, companies and organizations to place our interns. We think better because we have different points of view in our program management and development exercises.

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We have struggled with this work and we still are. That struggle makes us a better organization because of the results, the lessons learned and the pride of accomplishment. It prepares us to struggle, learn and achieve in others areas of our mission work.

Industry has long understood the value of diversity. Even *Fortune Magazine* includes “diversity programs” as one of the criteria its ranking of *100 Best Companies to Work For*.

Quite simply, while there are many reasons for diversity work, there is a strong organizational or business case for this work. I want to outline the elements of the organizational case for diversity and include some recommendations for organizations interesting in pursuing diversity initiatives of their own.

Let me start by defining two fundamental tenets of diversity work:

1. **Diversity is a natural law – monocultures tend not to survive, as they are vulnerable to disease, decay and disappearance.** Multi-cultures thrive because there is strength in many species that are competitive and compatible with each other.
2. **Nature is what brings us together.** The environment is the commonality of humans. It is illustrated in religions, poetry, humanities and the arts. Each of these fields reveals a reverence of nature that transcends boundaries, tribes, stories and thinking. This reverence for nature is what unites us as a species rather than divides us. If we are to be an effective social movement, we need to unite under this commonality. We need to bring new energy, perspective and commitment to this critical work.

As these tenets suggest, in order to survive and adapt to changing conditions, environmental organizations should both maximize their diversity and focus on building common ground between diverse members. In the case of the environmental movement, the need for adaptation is even more evident than many other sectors.

Right now, many are arguing that the relevance and the public mandate of the environmental movement is slipping as its issues are being “spun” and framed as elitist, extremist and obstructionist. In the last presidential election, current and emerging environmental issues did not play a role in the election outcome largely because both candidates were counseled that these issues were not important to the

general voter. The essay *The Death of Environmentalism* and Michael Crichton's book *State of Fear* struck a responsive chord with the public.

The environmental movement needs new energy, perspectives and re-vitalization. The first Earth Day was a wonderful example of an effective coalition of different parts of the community and political landscape. Leaders and people from all across the economy, community and country joined. Churches, unions, organizations, colleges and universities were represented. All kinds of movements joined forces: peace, environmental, women's lib, civil rights, economic justice and more. All political parties were involved.

We are a long way from that original coalition and vision. We need to return to that broad base of energy and commitment. In fact, the strength of this coalition was its diversity, and we now need to re-capture that expansive source of support and involvement. Broadening the environmental agenda to include people of color and their issues will add to our public mandate and legitimacy.

The environmental field needs to innovate and diversity is the agent for innovation.

“. . . while invention is a flower, innovation is a weed. We innovators have to be willing to be viewed as weeds by old boy networks. Innovation, in my experience, is not done by old boy networks, but by people, sometimes collaborating and mostly competing and annoying; teams of women and men – scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and of course, venture capitalists . . .”

Bob Metcalfe, general partner of Polaris Venture Partners

This quote points to the challenges and the opportunities of the innovation of diversity. As much as environmental values are challenging our larger society to be more efficient and less damaging to our natural resource systems, diversity is demanding the environmental movement to be more effective by broadening its agenda, perspectives, impact and talent.

The “old boy network” is the hurdle to the innovation of diversity. The old boy network can indeed be a group of elites who do not want things to change. Or it can be maintaining the status quo and well worn practices “We do it that way because we have always done it that way.” Regardless, the leaders and strategies for diversity need to be

annoying to stimulate the innovation and overcome the reluctance to change the old boy network of people and status quo.

The “old boy network” is the hurdle to the innovation of diversity.

Weeds might be a good metaphor for our diversity work. Weeds are very efficient and innovative in making “progress” by taking ground. And one person’s weed is another person’s flower. Diversity advocates and practitioners need to stimulate innovation and change to capitalize on the opportunities before us.

In addition to being critical to the success of the environmental movement, diversity is important to organizations for practical reasons as well. For example, in looking at future trends in wealth and philanthropy, diversity is playing an increasing role. The green movement has grown up on the baby boomers who are aging.

As the latest census figures show, the U.S. population is becoming more diverse. Minorities are becoming the majority.

How will the current “green” donor be replaced and who will replace them? In those changes, there are new opportunities and challenges for fund-raising, with diversity playing a more prominent role than in the past. It is logical to anticipate that more diverse donors will prefer to support more diverse organizations.

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In this case, it will behoove organizations seeking funding to employ a diverse staff. As the supply of staff tightens as the large generation of Baby Boomers retires, effective organizations will have

the opportunity to recruit from a diverse supply of talent to fill their staff positions. They will also have to be a lot more competitive and creative in the recruitment and retention of staff. But in order to recruit and retain diverse staff, an organization has to offer mission, programs and services that appeal to different types of people. Increasingly, young staff, diverse or not, want to see diversity programs inside organizations and through its program services and mission. It is a question of being up to date, current and legitimate.

In the last twenty years, Environmental Careers Organization has placed close to 3,000 diverse interns. We have researched and written three publications on diversity in the environmental field. We have held national conferences and diversity round tables. We have raised and distributed hundreds of thousands dollars to place interns in low income communities and communities of color. ECO staff has visited hundreds of minority academic institutions, career fairs and conferences to promote the wonders of environmental careers.

As a result of these efforts, many diverse ECO alumni now hold management and leadership positions across the environmental sector. In fact, today, over 35 percent of our annual placements of interns are students of color; 38 percent of our staff is from diverse backgrounds and 50 percent of our board are people of color. Compared with figures of less than 8 percent for our board, staff and interns in 1988, these figures reflect a vast increase in the diversity of ECO over the last two decades.

As a result of these efforts, many diverse ECO alumni now hold management and leadership positions across the environmental sector. In fact, today, over 35 percent of our annual placements of interns are students of color; 38 percent of our staff is from diverse backgrounds and 50 percent of our board are people of color. Compared with figures of less than 8 percent for our board, staff and interns in 1988, these figures reflect a vast increase in the diversity of ECO over the last two decades.

In reporting these successes, we do not wish to imply that our journey to diversity is complete. However, we do believe that, in traveling this path, we have learned some important lessons that we are excited to share.

The following recommendations reflect these lessons:

Recommendation #1: Diversity is a leadership issue and should be one of the top five issues for the organization. It needs to be managed for results. Leadership involves the board, executive management, staff, funders and clients.

Recommendation #2: Like every leadership issue, diversity needs a plan and accountability. This includes a plan with goals, objectives that can be measured, and a timetable that stays on track. The results of the plan and schedule should be reported regularly to the board. This plan must be part of recognition and compensation of management and staff.

Recommendation #3: The diversity plan and accountability for it should be present throughout the organization, its departments, and functions. It has to become part of the whole organization. It has to be the responsibility of everyone, and everyone has to be accountable.

Recommendation #4: Diversity should be seen as a commitment and a learning journey. Success in the pursuit of diversity takes a long time, and, in fact, diversity may never be “achieved.” It is only possible to get closer.

Recommendation #5: Begin, listen and learn. In the late 1980s, we developed a diversity plan through the work on an ECO intern. As part of this plan, we met and talked with leaders from many sectors, including organizations serving communities of color and environmental justice organizations. We listened to what they had to say and how we could help them. Then we responded in a way that conformed to our mission – by placing interns with them to work on their issues and priorities. And this process continues today.

Overall, the key to our success was that we acted, we learned from our actions and mistakes and we acted again all in concert with these

leaders, their communities and their work. And in doing so, we became better people, better managers, better leaders, and a better organization.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Better Science Through Diversity: Disciplinary and Cultural Diversity in the Environmental Sciences

Dr. Robyn Hannigan, Director and Judd Hill Chair of Environmental Sciences, Arkansas State University

SUMMARY

Environmental science is inherently diverse. Diversity in disciplines is the expected norm. Oddly, the embrace of disciplinary diversity has not extended to cultural diversity in our field. There is an impending demographic shift with the minority becoming the new majority and an expanded public awareness of environmental issues. Still, environmental sciences are a cultural diversity desert. We, as a community, have failed to recruit and retain minority environmental scientists. Through an exploration of disciplinary diversity we can gain insights into what is needed to increase cultural diversity in our field.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, interdisciplinary, minority, environmental science

Many environmental scientists embrace diversity each day. Diversity of disciplines is inherent to the profession; it is idealized in our teaching and practiced in our research. While environmental sciences integrates the sciences, including the social sciences, mathematics and engineering, it is intriguing to note that disciplinary turf wars still occur. The debate between pure and applied research rages. Academically, I was immersed in the pure sciences, completing an undergraduate degree in biology, a master's in geology and a PhD in geochemistry. My PhD is technically in Earth and Environmental Sciences but I can honestly say I never took a course in anything approximating environmental sciences. Sure I took ecology, geomorphology, aqueous geochemistry and all those disciplinary courses that claim to be environmental, but I suspect it typical of my "generation" that there was no real opportunity to take a course that integrated these disciplines. Now I find myself a chemistry professor and Director of a graduate program in environmental sciences. Perhaps it is because I switched disciplines so often that I now avoid the pratfalls of behaving as a stalwart defender of disciplinary purity.

I should be clear that by "interdisciplinary" I am not referring to educational or research programs that tout themselves as interdisciplinary because faculty from two or three sub-disciplines are involved. By interdisciplinary education I mean those programs, both research and education, that integrate natural and social sciences.

DISCIPLINARY DIVERSITY

In investigating disciplinary diversity in the environmental sciences over the past few decades some trends emerge. The tradition of renaming academic departments by adding "and Environmental Sciences" seems to have slowed if not disappeared (Romero and Silveri, 2006). I suspect that trend emerged in an attempt to stave off low enrollments and take advantage of the environmental movement of the 1970s into increasing college enrollments. I also suspect that this naming trend has ceased because it is inherently fraudulent. Disciplinary faculty cannot be asked to teach a truly interdisciplinary curriculum without training, just as one cannot shift research focus overnight. There has to be a driving force in developing truly interdisciplinary educational programs.

In my experience, the exemplary programs are those that developed around the interdisciplinary research activities of its faculty. Interdisciplinary research is an exploration of an environmental issue from different disciplinary perspectives with no single discipline dominating the research efforts of the team. This process may be initiated because of the perceived increase in extramural funding opportunities in the environmental sciences, but it is a committed and competent team of researchers from seemingly disparate science, engineering and social science perspectives that sustains it.

Understanding diversity in the environmental sciences from a disciplinary perspective begs the question “What is environmental science?” According to EnviroEducation.com, a website visited by potential environmental science majors, environmental science is the study of natural cycles and processes involving soil, plants, water and air and human impact on them and ecology is its disciplinary foundation. That is not what environmental science means to me as a practitioner or educator. Exploring relationships between the disciplines contributing to environmental science could lead to a better definition of environmental science.

Recently, at the American Chemical Society meeting, I attended a talk about the Map of Science project (Börner, 2007). The “map” represents the relationships between 1.6 million scientific articles. Most major disciplines are represented (physical and natural sciences, social sciences, medicine, engineering); however, no node on the map (<http://mapofscience.com>) is identifiably “environmental science”. Recall that the map is based on citations of scientific articles. For some of our academic institutions, the “pure” versus “applied” argument has been put to bed. Faculty at many institutions are now able to apply articles towards tenure and promotion that do not appear in specialized disciplinary journals. Still, the vast majority of environmental science research is published in discipline-specific journals. Drilling into the map of science, clear connections exist between the ecological and earth sciences, with earth sciences serving as a conduit for connections to physics and chemistry, and ecology serving as the nexus to connect to the social sciences. Environmental science, however, has not reached the position in research or education that merits it a disciplinary node on the map of science.

Perhaps the embrace of diversity with regards to disciplines is more loose and tenuous than we think.

If we accept the argument that environmental science is a field of science linking disciplines from chemistry and biology to sociology and economics, yet our research does not yet demonstrate this, perhaps our educational programs do. There are approximately 278 undergraduate Environmental Science (title of department or major) programs in the U.S. Of these, less than ten percent are located at minority serving institutions. Of the sixty eight master's and thirty four doctoral programs in Environmental Sciences only Florida A&M University, Hampton University (joint with the College of William and Mary, Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Old Dominion University), Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore offer "environmental science" doctoral programs. Maniates and Whissel (2000) and Romero and Silveri (2006) reviewed the structure of a number of undergraduate environmental science/studies programs in response to early criticism that such programs are inherently weak and hobble students (Soulé and Press, 1998). Both Maniates and Whissel (2000) and Romero and Silveri (2006) found that undergraduate environmental programs are diverse in their focus and so cannot be easily compared.

Environmental science, however, has not reached the position in research or education that merits it a disciplinary node on the map of science. Perhaps the embrace of diversity with regards to disciplines is more loose and tenuous than we think.

Environmental science programs have evolved so that the overwhelming majority integrate environmental education across the curriculum. These programs offer students concentrations within disciplines, and provide creative integrative electives and/or research opportunities so that students may extend their disciplinary knowledge into collaborative multidisciplinary areas. Most undergraduate and graduate environmental science programs emphasize the natural sciences, but many graduate programs also

provide course options in the social sciences to ensure that science students are introduced to issues such as environmental justice, economics, etc. My contention is that most environmental science graduate programs, unlike undergraduate programs, are outgrowths of faculty research interests and strengths. Ultimately though, the graduate programs that grew through opportunistic name addition have floundered and no longer populate, to any great extent, the undergraduate environmental science landscape.

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Accepting that environmental scientists embrace disciplinary diversity begs the question of why there are so few minority environmental scientists. I believe that diversity in disciplines is vital to studying environmental issues such as pollution of water bodies, sustainable use of natural resources etc., and I trust that my peers would concur. I do not, however, believe that my peers accept the parallel argument that cultural diversity in the environmental sciences is equally vital to studying these issues. I say this because I see limited evidence that the “creed” has become the “deed”. By 2050 minority groups will constitute the new majority (Day, 1996). In 2000 the U.S. population was 75.1% Caucasian, 12.3% African American, 12.9% Hispanic, 0.9% Native American, 3.6% Asian and 0.1% Pacific Islander. By 2050 it is expected that the demographics of the U.S. will be markedly different, with 47.8% of the population being Caucasian, 15.8% African American, 25.7% Hispanic, 1.0% Native American, and 9.7% Asian and Pacific Islander. To serve the nation’s population and address environmental issues, we must respond proactively to the impending

demographic shift. With pressure on Earth's resources, and focused attention on environmental issues, we will need environmental scientists to reflect the U.S. population.

Of the environmental science programs in U.S. colleges, very few are located at minority serving institutions. The lack of such programs has been addressed through value-added programs at minority and majority campuses. Such programs as Multicultural Students at Sea Together (M.A.S.T.) at Hampton University and Research Experiences in Science of the Environment at Arkansas State University (R.I.S.E.) have leveraged federal funding into programs that provide meaningful research in the environmental sciences with a clear focus on enhancing diversity. In addition to enrichment programs, unique linkages between minority serving institutions and scientific societies have led to a transformation in the aquatic sciences. Such is the case for the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography (ASLO) – National Science Foundation – Hampton University, a minority student program that provides students with the opportunity to present their research at a national meeting. The program integrates mentorship, opportunities to meet minority role models, and cultural enrichment experiences – ultimately integrating young minority students into the culture of the aquatic sciences.

If we continue to fail them by not integrating them into the culture of research, our science is, frankly, doomed. More and more environmental issues emerge in regions of the country where the population is predominantly minority. If practitioners do not reflect the population, it will be difficult to engage stakeholders and difficult to effect meaningful change.

While a number of efforts to enhance diversity in the environmental sciences exist for K-12 students, we still lack the diversity necessary to reflect the demographics of the U.S. There is a critical shortage of M.S. and Ph.D. level minority environmental scientists. If we continue to fail them by not integrating them into the culture of research, our science is, frankly, doomed. More and more environmental issues emerge in regions of the country where the

population is predominantly minority. If practitioners do not reflect the population, it will be difficult to engage stakeholders and difficult to effect meaningful change. We will not solve issues of sustainability or global change, or whatever the hot button issue of the day might be, without diverse perspectives and new approaches. In my opinion, by failing to increase representation of minorities in the environmental sciences, we are failing our planet.

Few environmental science graduate programs exist at minority serving institutions despite the great need for such (e.g., McManus et al., 2000). Therefore, it is incumbent on majority serving institutions to fill the gap. Doing so in partnership with a minority serving institution (i.e., the Hall-Bonner Program at Hampton University, Old Dominion University, the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science) is one mechanism to assist in transitioning students from undergraduate to graduate programs. It is vital that majority institutions buy into the critical need to increase minority representation in the environmental sciences and design and offer meaningful rigorous graduate programs that allow minority students to enroll and complete graduate degrees. In other words, academia has to shift from a culture of exclusion to a culture of inclusion.

The first step to increase diversity in the environmental sciences is to establish a stable and significant effort behind effecting change. Majority graduate program administrators and faculty mentors must embrace the importance of the issue in the way that disciplinary diversity in the environmental sciences has been embraced. Environmental science is inherently interdisciplinary and it is also inherently culturally diverse. Several universities have developed scholarship programs to increase diversity, but have made the error of naming these scholarships “diversity” awards or variations of that theme. This sends the unintended message to the recipient that they are different, and contributes to the imposter syndrome leading the student to feel that they would have no funding at all, were it not for their ethnicity. While set aside funding can help graduate programs in their recruitment efforts, it is vital that students who receive funds know that they competed on an even playing field with other applicants and that the award was merit based.

Majority programs must understand that education is not one size fits all. There are meaningful and important cultural differences that

programs and faculty should recognize and respect. Whether connection to family, tribe or religion, minority students bring unique cultural perspectives that, if nurtured, add significant depth to the graduate experience for all students. Programs and faculty need to watch for and be sensitive to exclusive behaviors and attitudes, regardless of student race or ethnicity. How this transformation occurs and what mechanisms are best to maintain a culturally competent program varies with individuals and program focus. Transformation will only occur if there is a proactive, campus-wide commitment to enhancing diversity – not just for diversity sake, but because education and scholarship are enriched by diverse perspectives.

CONCLUSION

There is a clear need for disciplinary and cultural diversity in the environmental sciences. Disciplinary diversity appears to be the norm in both environmental research and education programs. Rigor in curricula and scholarship are expected in our field. What is lacking is the accompanying cultural diversity that will lead to truly transformative research and education. To achieve diversity in all aspects, environmental science education programs must embrace the importance of cultural diversity as they have disciplinary diversity. To paraphrase Laura Réndon (1992) we will change environmental sciences even as environmental sciences changes us and more and more of us will integrate diversity in all aspects of what we do.

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Dr. Hannigan’s circuitous route to a career in environmental chemistry began at the College of New Jersey where she earned her BS

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In 2005 Dr. Hannigan formed a new company, Hyphenated Solutions, with two of her graduate students. This company now provides sample introduction systems to industry leaders such as PerkinElmer and Cetac Technologies.

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Preventing Environmental Health Risks to Children and Promoting Collaborative Research and Environmental Justice

Dr. Frederica P. Perera, Professor, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, and Director, Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health

SUMMARY

Research is needed on environmental health risks to children in disadvantaged, minority communities to improve environmental health policy and environmental justice. Multiple health effects in children have already been associated with environmental pollution, and minority communities tend to be both disproportionately exposed to pollutants and disproportionately affected by environmentally-related disease. Identifying environmental risks in these populations will lead to prevention of serious diseases including childhood asthma, developmental disorders, and cancer. Translation to policy requires the communication of scientific results to the health policy context. Effective community-academic partnerships to translate scientific data into public health policy are essential and will ensure major benefits to children's environmental health and greater environmental justice.

KEY WORDS

Environmental health sciences, environmental justice, community-based participatory research, translational research, community outreach, partnership, health disparities, children's health, PAH, pesticides, ETS, asthma, cancer, developmental disability, adverse birth outcomes, WE ACT, CCCEH

INTRODUCTION*

The theme of this article is twofold: I will elaborate on the need for more research on the environmental health risks to children in disadvantaged, minority communities to provide comprehensive and inclusive information for environmental health policy and environmental justice. Research reviewed here indicates that multiple health effects in children are associated with environmental pollution and that minority communities tend to be both disproportionately exposed to pollutants and disproportionately affected by environmentally-related diseases, including childhood asthma, developmental disorders, and cancer. In a second instance, I will describe the benefits and importance of collaborations as exemplified by the community-based participatory research model (CBPR) that our NIEHS-funded Center, Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH), has assumed with West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) in order for government agencies and academic institutions to better understand and incorporate community concerns into their research agendas (1).

NEEDED RESEARCH ON THE HEALTH BURDEN INCURRED BY MINORITY CHILDREN

Childhood diseases impose significant burdens on families and society, have increased in recent decades, and are thought to be caused in substantial part by environmental factors such as toxic exposures due to lifestyle (smoking and diet) and pollutants in the workplace, ambient air, and water and food supply. The exogenous exposures can interact with "host" factors such as genetic susceptibility and nutritional deficits, and with psychosocial stressors associated with poverty, to cause disease or developmental impairment.

Common Diseases

Asthma

Pediatric asthma is a serious and growing public health problem in the United States and in many other countries (2, 3). The percentage of

* This chapter is adapted from Perera FP, Viswanathan S, Whyatt RM, Tang D, Miller RL, Rauh V, *Children's Environmental Health Research Highlights from the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health*, Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1076: 15-28, 2006.

children with asthma has doubled between 1980 and 1995 in the U.S. (from 3.6% in 1980 to 7.5% in 1995) (3). An estimated 8.7% (6.3 million) of children had asthma in 2001 (3). Rates vary widely by geographic area and ethnic group. New York City is one of four metropolitan areas in the country with the highest annual increase in asthma mortality (4). Five of the seven New York City zip code areas with the highest asthma hospitalization rates are located in Harlem (5). In the South Bronx in 1994, prevalence of asthma among children < 17 years of age was 17.9% in Hispanics, 11.6% among non-Hispanic blacks, and 8.2% among whites (6). A recent study found that over 25% of elementary school children in Harlem had asthma (7). Another study of pediatric asthma rates suggested that material and behavioral characteristics associated with poverty, such as parental smoking, air pollution, housing conditions, and allergens, may contribute to the disparities (8).

Ongoing research

While air pollution has long been known to be a trigger for asthma in children, more recent studies are pointing to an early causal role in the disease. Results from the CCCEH cohort study of African-American and Latina mothers and children in Northern Manhattan highlight the importance of the prenatal period of development, showing that difficulty breathing and probable asthma were reported more frequently among children exposed to prenatal PAHs and ETS (measured by a biomarker of nicotine exposure) postnatally (9). A parallel cohort study in Europe has found that prenatal PAH exposure was associated with an increased risk for respiratory symptoms during the course of the infant's first year of life (10). Together these research reports confirm that consideration both of ethnicity and social class is essential in understanding the determinants and distribution of asthma in populations, as well as in devising needed interventions in communities (1).

Cancer

The incidence of certain childhood cancers in US children has increased as well. The age-adjusted annual incidence of cancer in children increased from 128 to 161 cases per million children between 1975 and 1998 (3). Leukemia was the most common cancer diagnosis

from 1973-1998, representing about 20% of total cancer cases. Central nervous system tumors represented about 17% of childhood cancers.

Ongoing research

Environmental exposures are recognized as potentially important risk factors for childhood cancer (11); and again biomarkers are proving useful in assessing causal relationships. For example, carcinogen-DNA adducts are considered a biomarker of biologically effective doses of PAHs and of increased cancer risk (12). Research in African-American and Latina, Caucasians and Chinese mothers and newborns has shown that PAH-DNA adduct levels in the cord white blood cells of newborns are higher per estimated unit exposure than in the mother's blood, indicating greater fetal susceptibility to genetic damage (13).

Chromosomal aberrations have been associated with increased risk of cancer in multiple studies and are a well validated biomarker of the preclinical effect of carcinogens (14, 15). In the CCCEH newborns, maternal exposure to airborne PAHs during pregnancy was associated with increased frequency of chromosomal aberrations in WBC, suggesting that risk of cancer can be increased by exposure *in utero* (16).

Adverse birth outcomes

Low birth weight is the second leading predictor of infant mortality in the United States as well as a major cause of delayed development (17) and a risk factor for childhood asthma (18). In general, children in minority communities in NYC are at elevated risk for low birth weight and subsequent cognitive delay compared to other U.S. populations, but rates vary between them. In 1997, the incidence of low birth weight was 13.5% in central Harlem, 10.5% in the South Bronx, and 7.7% in Washington Heights, compared to 7.1% in whites in New York City (19).

Developmental disorders

Developmental disabilities, the name given to a broad group of conditions caused by learning or physical impairments, affect an estimated 17% of U.S. children under age 18 (20). The high rates of these childhood disorders have significant social impacts and medical costs for individual families and the country as a whole. Children in minority communities are also at elevated risk of subsequent cognitive delay compared to other populations. For example, 68% of elementary school children in Washington Heights and 74% in central Harlem are reading below grade level, compared with 46% city-wide (21).

Ongoing research

Experimental studies of prenatal and neonatal exposure to the organophosphate pesticide chlorpyrifos (CPF) have demonstrated neurochemical and behavioral effects as well as selected brain cell loss (22-26). Children in the CCCEH cohort who were prenatally exposed to high levels of CPF, as measured by high cord plasma CPF levels, were significantly more likely than children with low cord levels to experience delay in both psychomotor and cognitive development at 3 years of age (27). In addition, the highly exposed children were significantly more likely than less exposed children to manifest symptoms of attentional disorders, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and pervasive personality disorder at age 3. Although the EPA banned residential use of CPF in 2001, this pesticide is still widely used in agriculture. In addition, cohort children with high prenatal exposure to airborne PAHs also had significantly lower test scores at age 3 on the Bayley test for cognitive development, after controlling for pesticide exposure (plasma CPF) (28).

Many cohort studies have demonstrated that low-level exposure to lead (even below 10ug/dL in blood) during early childhood is inversely associated with neuropsychological development through the first ten years of life (29-33). Prenatal exposure to PCBs and methylmercury, predominantly from maternal seafood consumption, has also been associated with neurocognitive deficits (34). In these studies, biomarkers (including blood concentrations) have been instrumental in quantifying the internal dose of the pollutants.

POSSIBLE FACTORS BEHIND INCREASED RISKS TO SPECIFIC COMMUNITIES

These figures outline the disproportionately high rates of neurodevelopmental disorders, asthma, and cancer in underserved, minority populations in the United States.

These health disparities clearly reflect many factors but are thought to be due in part to greater exposure to certain environmental toxins (8). Many studies have reported the disproportionate exposure of minorities to air pollution, including during pregnancy (35, 36). In Harlem, Washington Heights, and the South Bronx minority communities in New York City (37, 38) where our partnership (WE ACT - CCCEH) conducts its work (1), poor quality housing, diesel bus

depots, a multitude of small industrial operations, and combustion-related pollution from the substantial network of highways are all to blame for this disproportionate exposures to environmental toxins. A further-reaching study operating at the county level for the United States found that Hispanic, African-American, and Asian/Pacific Islander mothers experienced higher mean levels of air pollution and were more than twice as likely to live in the most polluted counties compared with white mothers between 1998 and 1999 after controlling for maternal risk factors, region, and educational status (36).

Nutritional deficits and genetic predisposition can increase the effect of environmental exposures. For example, by removing free radicals and oxidant intermediates, antioxidants protect DNA from the genotoxic, procarcinogenic effects of chemicals that bind to DNA (39, 40). Genetic susceptibility can take the form of common variants or “polymorphisms” that modulate the individual response to a toxic exposure such as organophosphate pesticides (41, 42), lead (43), tobacco smoke (44), or PAHs (40, 45, 46). The dietary habits of children in particular cause increased exposure to food-borne toxicants. U.S. children under 5 years of age eat three to four times more food per unit of body weight than the average adult American; and the average one-year-old drinks 10-20 times more juice than the average adult (47).

Adverse social condition at the individual and community-levels can produce profound effects on host susceptibility to disease (48). Recent studies have shown that women who live in violent, crime-ridden, physically decayed neighborhoods are more likely to experience pregnancy complications and adverse birth outcomes, after adjusting for a range of individual level sociodemographic attributes and health behaviors (49, 50). Other studies have suggested that the stresses of racism and community segregation are associated with lower birth weight (4). A recent study by CCCEH found that the risk of developmental delay among children exposed prenatally to maternal ETS was significantly greater among those whose mothers experienced material hardship during pregnancy (51).

Sensitive populations, either due to age, behavior, health status or a combination of these, are also populations of concern. Exposure to genotoxic and nongenotoxic chemicals as well as chemicals that exert both types of effects is at stake here. The latter include so-called “endocrine disruptors” that mimic or block natural hormones (52).

During pregnancy for example, toxicants to which the mother is exposed can reach the fetus via placental transfer; and toxicants stored in the bodies of mothers can become bioavailable, also exposing the fetus. Lactation is another potential source of exposure to infants. In addition, the *in utero* and childhood periods are characterized by rapid physical and mental growth and gradual maturation of major organ systems (53). Since cells are proliferating rapidly and organ systems are immature, they are sensitive to the potentially harmful effects of environmental toxins. The fetus and child also clear many toxicants less readily than the adult (54-58). Young children breathe air closer to the ground, exposing them to particles and vapors present in carpets and soil. While playing and crawling on the floor, children can inhale or dermally absorb toxicants which are subsequently absorbed more efficiently in children than in adults (53). In addition, infants have twice the breathing rate of the average adult. Hand-to-mouth behavior and thumb sucking habits can also increase exposure. Dermal exposures may also be higher, as a typical newborn has more than double the surface area of skin per unit of body weight than an adult (59). Experimental and human data indicate that the fetus and young child are indeed especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), particulate matter, nitrosamines, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), metals, and radiation (54, 60, 61), as shown by the Center's own work.

Beyond infants and children, elderly and immuno-compromised individuals are also particularly vulnerable to exposure to environmental toxicants.

TRANSLATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY

The research reviewed above has clear implications for environmental health policy. Translation to policy requires the communication and implementation of scientific results to the realm of health policy. Involving a diverse group of players active along the continuum from study idea to research and analysis to policy outcome is key and helps facilitate the entire process. Community-academic partnerships have demonstrated considerable potential for translation of science to policy. The importance in particular of community involvement in setting and implementing research agendas to address environ-

mental justice issues, such as the disproportionate burden that environmental degradation and pollution have had on the health and well-being of communities of color and low-income populations, cannot be denied (1).

Community-based Participatory Research Model (CBPR)

The past two decades have witnessed a rapid proliferation of community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects (62). CBPR is a model rooted physically and conceptually in community. In CBPR, scientists work in close collaboration with community partners involved in all phases of the research, from the inception of the research questions and study design, to the collection of the data, monitoring of ethical concerns, and interpretation of the study results. Importantly, in CBPR, the research findings are communicated to the broader community – including residents, the media, and policymakers – so they may be utilized to effect needed changes in environmental and health policy to improve existing conditions. Building upon existing strengths and resources, CBPR seeks to build capacity and resources in communities and ensure that government agencies and academic institutions are better able to understand and incorporate community concerns into their research agendas (1).

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), the premier biomedical research facility for environmental health, has taken a lead in promoting the use of CBPR in instances where community-university partnerships serve to advance our understanding of environmentally related disease. CBPR can be an effective tool to enhance our knowledge of the causes and mechanisms of disorders having an environmental etiology, reduce the adverse health outcomes through innovative intervention strategies and policy change, and address the environmental health concerns of community residents (62).

Currently absent from CBPR research, however, is work on the crucial global environmental justice topics, including deforestation and loss of biodiversity, agriculture and soil erosion, climate change and stratospheric ozone depletion, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and wastes (1).

WE ACT – CCEH Partnership

One such partnership between West Harlem Environmental Action,

Inc. (WE ACT), an environmental justice organization, and the CCCEH at the Mailman School of Public Health exemplifies the emerging model of community-based action designed to advance environmental health policy and improve the quality of life in New York City and throughout the United States. This eight-year collaboration has had multilevel impacts on a variety of environmental justice achievements: air monitoring studies published in peer-reviewed journals, training courses for community leaders on environmental health topics, educational forums for community residents on environmental justice issues, and meaningful input into policy decisions that have addressed issues like diesel exhaust in Northern Manhattan. WE ACT has provided strategic leadership in translation of the scientific findings to environmental health policy and practice. This partnership has been given substantial credit for the conversion of the NYC bus fleet to clean diesel and the installation by the EPA of permanent air monitors in Harlem and other “hot spots” (1, 63).

CCCEH: Other impacts on policy

Several of the CCCEH’s other findings, in concert with the efforts of other research centers and environmental organizations, have had an impact on environmental health policy in low-income neighborhoods of NYC and beyond. For instance, CCCEH data on health effects associated with prenatal pesticide exposure helped pass two landmark pesticide bills in NYC to reduce residential exposure to pesticides. WE ACT was instrumental in making the New York City Council aware of the findings. CCCEH investigators also provided their research results in expert testimony during NYC’s development of mandates for city-funded construction projects to use vehicles with low-sulfur fuel and particle traps. Through its role as a mediator and frequent meetings with community residents to address concerns about pollution, the partnership convinced Mayor Bloomberg to keep the 135th Street Marine Waste Transfer Station closed in Harlem because of health concerns, keeping 320 polluting diesel garbage trucks out of the area every day. The partnership also supported the negotiation of contracts with the New York City Transit Agency to retrofit old diesel buses with emission reduction technology in Northern Manhattan, was engaged in keeping the Amsterdam Bus Depot closed, and advocated for New York State penalties on diesel vehicle idling.

CONCLUSION

Effective community-academic partnerships to translate data into public health policy will ensure major benefits to children's environmental health and greater environmental justice. The high rates of asthma, certain cancers, and developmental disability in children, the disproportionate burden borne by minorities, and the growing evidence that risk of disease is associated with *in utero* and childhood environmental exposures support an "early focus" in prevention. When preventive measures have been enacted based on this knowledge, children's health has benefited. The disproportionate burden of pollution across communities, the impacts of multiple and cumulative exposures – including the potential for synergistic effects – and the special concerns of susceptible populations, including children, the immuno-compromised, and the aged, are important concerns. To truly affect meaningful change in the environments and health of communities of color and low-income communities, academic institutions and community-based organizations and leaders must engage the larger public and work in coalition with government agencies, public and private foundations, policymakers, legal experts, and local businesses (1).

It is important to have diverse institutions and groups of people engaged in this type of research because research results underlie regulatory decisions that affect many different parties in different ways. The agendas of the different stakeholders in environmental health and more broadly in the environmental movement must be synchronized as much as possible in order to obtain the most focused and effective outcomes.

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Indifference to Cultural Inclusion: Not an Option in the U.S. Environmental Movement

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SUMMARY

This chapter addresses the need for building the pipeline of talent in the environmental movement. It speaks to the business case, the value of inclusion and the growing clout of diverse people. If the environmental movement is to truly speak to the needs of the global community, it will need to understand the values, interests and cultural mores of diverse peoples.

The chapter explores issues, concerns and opportunities revolving around two paramount questions: “Can the environmental movement be successful if its constituents and leaders are indifferent to diversity and inclusion?” and “What are the risks and the potential rewards of modeling inclusive behavior?”

KEY WORDS

Diversity, inclusion, environmental movement, workforce representation, affirmative action, outreach, supplier diversity, business case, business imperative for diversity, respectful work environment, employer of choice

In August 2005, while witnessing the unprecedented horror of Hurricane Katrina, I saw a young African-American boy on national television speaking about the impact of the hurricane on his family and community. You could sense the hopelessness and despair in his voice as he posed the question: “*What is we gonna do?*”

Implicit in his questioning was a call to all of us, black and white, brown and yellow, to come together in building strategies to overcome the forces of nature and the brunt of this hurricane’s destruction.

Since that time, we have witnessed the impact of the ravages of wind and rain, and have seen how the chill of the air can devastate a crop of oranges, lemons and strawberries in the verdant green fields of California. We can sense the urgency of the farmers and the crews of Latino migrant workers scurrying to save what little food is left.

The irony of the loss is not in just the food supply killed by nature, but the livelihood robbed from many Latino laborers. While many of the poor and disenfranchised workers will bear much of the cost of this disaster in lost wages and harder living conditions, many of the more affluent residents of the state will not really feel the impact. The Latino community in the end is more significantly impacted. I am reminded of that haunting cry of the young African-American boy, “*What is we gonna do?*”

As nature continues to exact a mounting toll, it appears that people of color, the poor and the disenfranchised bear a significant part of the burden. It is not just an issue confined to the shores of the United States; it is a global issue.

There is a strategic imperative in the environmental movement for greater diversity and inclusion. The business case is very clear:

- Diversity trumps homogeneity in developing creative solutions to environmental issues.
- Diverse champions are needed to garner support from constituent groups.
- Implementation of new initiatives will require new voices from these “diverse communities” that are impacted by proposed change.
- The environmental mindset must shift to thinking of these diverse communities as customers. As such they should seek to understand their beliefs, values and history and integrate them into the strategy.

- Civil and governmental leadership in many communities, especially urban centers, has become more diverse. As a result, the issuance of new policies, mandates, and regulatory licenses will be decided by these policymakers. Not fully understanding and embracing the diversity of local leadership will make implementation more difficult.

The environmental movement is still perceived as a white, upper middle class movement, with very little involvement of minority groups. It appears that the movement continues to be indifferent to the need to be more inclusive and diverse. The movement must address that fundamental concern.

CAN THE MOVEMENT SURVIVE IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF INDIFFERENCE?

As I reflect on the challenges that these environmental disasters present, I wonder who is helping to solve the issues, to explore creative solutions, and to measure the impact on the communities and geographical areas affected. Are the policy makers and strategists reflective of these diverse communities? Is diversity a consideration? Does it make a difference? Are our universities producing graduates in the environmental field that reflect the diversity of these societies who can help? Problems occurring in communities that bear the brunt of the catastrophe can not be effectively solved without the engagement and participation of their people. To enhance the decision-making process, these communities need more representation in academic programs related to environmental science. The movement cannot continue to be indifferent about diversity in local community decision-making, education and employment. Indifference is not a suitable response if the movement expects to survive.

Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel articulated the concerns regarding indifference in a White House speech, titled *The Perils of Indifference*. He explained that:

Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor – never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten. The political

prisoner in his cell, the hungry children, the homeless refugees – not to respond to their plight, not to relieve their solitude by offering them a spark of hope is to exile them from human memory. And in denying their humanity, we betray our own. Indifference, then, is not only a sin, it is a punishment.¹

If we are to explore the impact of environmental change on the lives of people, we cannot do it without understanding and appreciating the values and the cultures of the people impacted. We cannot be indifferent to their mores and cultural traditions.

Organizations and businesses that profess to be passionate about the environment and its impact on society are only spouting words if they don't fully understand and appreciate the values of the people that live in it.

Organizations and businesses that profess to be passionate about the environment and its impact on society are only spouting words if they don't fully understand and appreciate the values of the people that live in it.

Instilling the values of the movement begins in the schools and with children in these diverse communities. Mr. Wiesel went a bit further in his essay to write:

What about the children? Oh, we see them on television, we read about them in the papers, and we do so with a broken heart. Their fate is always the most tragic, inevitably. When adults wage war, children perish. We see their faces, their eyes. Do we hear their pleas? Do we feel their pain, their agony? Every minute one of them dies of disease, violence, famine. Some of them – so many of them – could be saved.²

So I come back again to the voice of the young African-American boy as he laments: “*What is we gonna do?*”

¹ Wiesel, Elie. *The Perils of Indifference*. White House Millennium Lecture Series. April 12, 1999.

² *Ibid.*

HOW SHOULD GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES BE ADDRESSED?

The question posed by this unassuming young boy is against a backdrop of significant global environmental challenges including climate change, global warming, worsening air quality, extreme weather changes and increasingly fragile ecosystems.

These changes are impacting every strata of our global society. We cannot adequately address the ramifications of these changes without the collective efforts of leaders from our diverse communities around the world. Consider the impact, the lasting imprint, and the environmental context that Katrina has left on the souls of the people of New Orleans. The soul of this young boy has been indelibly changed. He, like countless others from disenfranchised and neglected communities around the world, are symbolic of the type of diverse input needed in deciding what and how to address environmental issues.

Perhaps the answers will come from a new generation of diverse children who will swiftly usher in a new era of leadership in the environmental movement like the winds of El Niño. El Niño is Spanish for *The Little Boy*. It refers to the Christ child and was named by a Mexican fisherman, who noticed that the climate pattern often formed around Christmas time. We are seeing the impact of El Niño these days. It is symbolic of the swiftness of change needed in the environmental movement, like some of the physical results it is exacting on modern day society.

The significant environmental changes related to El Niño are impacting our health with an increased incidence of illnesses such as asthma. They are also creating extreme weather conditions such as hurricanes, tornadoes and heat waves.

These changing weather patterns, including other major natural disasters, are having a devastating impact on the global economy in areas such as significant crop loss, the destruction of property and loss of fish/seafood revenues. They are also impacting the fragile ecosystems in wine producing areas, coral reefs and natural streams and rivers.

Perhaps this little boy who asked “*What is we gonna do?*” is a modern-day prophet serving notice to an indifferent world. The environmental movement must usher in a new generation of

visionary leaders much like the way El Niño brings dramatic change to unsuspecting communities. Racial and ethnic diversity is a cornerstone of the movement's future.

RACE AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Race and class have factored into the environmental debate for years. Whether it is the siting of freeways, factories or new communities, those in lower income areas that are generally racial minorities are those most negatively affected by the environmental consequences of these actions. Impacts include noise, water and air pollution, aesthetics and physical and economic dislocation. The environmental movement has played a key role in inspiring the development community to become aware of, and to address the human health aspects of actions that impact the environment.

On the other hand the economic benefits of this development have been important to the very people who are potentially impacted. The environmental movement can do a better job of understanding the balance between good environmental performance, good economic performance and the needs of those people most affected. In turn, the development and environmental communities can do a better job of including the people most affected by such decisions. That is the win-win for environmental progress.

THE IMPACT OF CULTURE, TRADITION AND LEGACY ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Several years ago I had the distinct pleasure to sit with a group of Cree Tribal Leaders in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada. I was educated on a few of the values and beliefs of this great people.

As I witnessed a tribal dance and heard the participants chant "Wake up, the birds still sing," I came to appreciate the values that many native people have for their heritage and legacy. I also learned to understand their deep and abiding love for the land, the products of the land, and all of the Creator's animals. My newfound learning and appreciation caused me to reflect on why diversity in all facets of the environmental movement is important.

There is a deep love and appreciation for nature and the world we live in shared by people around the world. In many communities they

hold the forests, the animals, and other natural wonders sacred. Leaders in the environmental movement and industry cannot create lasting change and solutions to growing problems without understanding the legends and stories that guide the daily lives of many types of people. Nor can they do it with an attitude of indifference and disrespect for their cultural traditions and heritage.

If the environmental movement is to create lasting and sustainable change leading to healthier communities, cleaner air and safer living environments, the international context for social responsibility and action must be understood. The framework adopted by the United Nations in 2005 underscores the need to embrace and value different cultural expressions, especially in the environmental movement.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT ESTABLISHED BY UNESCO³

In October of 2005 the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), meeting in Paris, developed a document entitled *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* affirming that diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity. They explained that:

. . . cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations.

The main objective of the Convention is to create, in the context of an increasingly interconnected world, an enabling environment in which all cultural expressions may be affirmed in their rich creative diversity, renewed through exchanges and partnerships, and made accessible to all for the benefit of humanity. In doing so, the Convention provides an innovative platform for international cultural cooperation, with particular emphasis on developing countries, and it reaffirms the ties that bind culture and development to foster mutual understanding and dialogue between peoples.⁴

³ General Conference of the United Nations. October 2005. *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression*. Information available at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=31038&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

⁴ *Ibid.*

At the meeting, UNESCO developed eight guiding principles:

1. Principle of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
2. Principle of sovereignty.
3. Principle of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures.
4. Principle of international solidarity and cooperation.
5. Principle of complementarity of economic and cultural aspects of development.
6. Principle of sustainable development.
7. Principle of equitable access.
8. Principle of openness and balance.

These eight principles underscore the importance of diversity and of cultural expression. They also set the global context for action.

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The associated discussions between world leaders reinforce our global connectedness, respect for diverse people that clearly demonstrate an alignment with cooperative undertaking, and sharing between people around the world.

Perhaps the answer to the young African-American boy's lament lies in the words and principles crafted by this organization. UNESCO's actions do not suggest indifference, but a healthy respect

for diverse sets of values and backgrounds and an appreciation of different perspectives.

THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT IS A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

The growing changes and the devastation in recent years as a result of natural disasters have to be fully considered and understood in the context of society, values, legend and history.

One cannot assume that everyone shares the same perspective about nature, ecosystems or scientific concepts like global warming. We need to understand the perspectives of diverse communities if the movement expects full participation by all segments of our global society.

Even in the United States, we are seeing the growing connection between economic, cultural and environmental endeavors. Our fate, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, is inextricably bound in each other's fate. We must have an inclusive, global strategy if we are to succeed. If we are not inclusive, our strategies and policies will fail.

An accelerating convergence between the economic and the cultural is currently occurring in modern life and is bringing in its train new kinds of urban and regional outcomes and opening up new opportunities for policy makers to raise local levels of income, employment, and social well-being.⁵

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STRATEGY, POLICY, AND ACTIONS SHOULD BE BASED ON DIVERSE INPUT

If the actions and strategies of the environmental movement are to hold up over time, they should incorporate ideas from representatives of diverse communities. Actions and strategies should be crafted in

⁵ Scott, Allen J. Cultural Products, Industries and Urban Economic Development, *Urban Affairs Review*, Vol 39, No. 4, March 2004: 461-490.

such a way as to not negatively impact the people in societies and geographies worldwide. Indigenous people from communities around the world want, and expect to play, an increasingly pivotal role in decisions affecting their communities. Therefore, environmental leaders must proactively seek their input and opinions about proposed policies and regulations.

A company's license to operate in these communities will be determined by how they engage, respect, and value the opinions and desires of the community impacted.

Corporations are keen to avoid interference in their business through taxation or regulations. By taking substantive voluntary steps they can persuade governments and the wider public that they are taking current issues like health and safety, diversity or the environment seriously and so avoid intervention. This also applies to firms seeking to justify eye-catching profits and high levels of boardroom pay. Those operating away from their home country can make sure they stay welcome by being good corporate citizens with respect to labour standards and impacts on the environment.⁶

An inclusive strategy insures that the desires and interests of the broader community are a key part of the decision-making process. This approach builds in processes for gathering input and feedback on emerging strategic direction and initiatives. Failure to engage the community in meaningful dialogue and discussion can make implementation of any new initiative much more difficult and more likely to stall.

Put simply, the variety of ideologies and organizational structures of groups within the movement make the environmental movement difficult to suppress. The diversity of organizations affords maximum penetration of and recruitment from different socioeconomic and sub-cultural groups, contributes to a system of reliability through redundancy, duplication, and overlap, maximizes adaptive variation through diversity of participants and purposes, and encourages social innovation and problem solving.⁷

⁶ Wikipedia – Corporate Social Responsibility. www.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_social_responsibility. Accessed from the World Wide Web February 2007.

⁷ Silveira, Stacy. *The American Environmental Movement: Surviving Through Diversity*, *Boston College Environmental Affairs Law Review*. Winter 2001.

There is a growing connection between the environmental, the civil rights and the human rights movements. This connection is strengthening the output of each movement. This interconnectedness can be seen in the five pillars of human rights: housing, employment, health, environment and economic development. None can be fully assessed or develop strategies without a careful consideration and application of diversity lenses. These movements are beginning to realize that they will be unable to fulfill their vision and ultimate potential without a healthy appreciation and respect for diversity.

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SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IS A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR CORPORATE AMERICA

According to David Crowther and Lez Rayman-Bacchus, corporate social responsibility is concerned with what is or should be the relationship between the global corporation, governments of countries and individual citizens. More locally, the definition is concerned with the relationship between a corporation and the local society in which it operates.⁸ This growing relationship between a company, government and community suggests a growing focus on social responsibility and stewardship.

Corporations cannot sit on the sideline and assume that they have no role in the efforts in environmental or social efforts or causes. Consider this fact: Fifty-one of the one hundred largest economies in

⁸ David Crowther and Lez Rayman-Bacchus. 2004. *Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility*, Chapter 1, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

the world are now corporations, not nations. The astonishing increase in size and global scope of a few key companies defines our world. Three hundred billion dollar entities with businesses in at least 150 countries each are no longer rare. Corporate Social Responsibility is closely linked to the principles of sustainable development, which argue that enterprises should be obliged to make decisions based on financial/economic factors (e.g. profits, return on investment, dividend payments, etc.) as well as on the social, environmental and other consequences of their activities.

There is a role for businesses and corporations and they must carefully craft strategies for what “they are going to do.” Bruce Piasecki, in his newly released book, *World Inc*, talks about the growing importance of corporate social responsibility. He points out that this focus is an important consideration in doing business. Increasingly, shareholders, boards of directors, and consumers are placing greater demands on corporations to operate more ethically and with a greater appreciation of the environment and the planet in their methods of operations. Careful consideration of a company’s impact on the environment and society is becoming a matter of its long term sustainability. Bruce Piasecki, in his reference to social response capitalism, says:

Social response, the new differentiator between companies that will thrive and those that will wither, involves corporations developing from within, on their own, and for their own, a new core of product knowledge and social vision.⁹

DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is a collection of methods intended to create and sustain development that seeks to relieve poverty, create equitable standards of living, satisfy the basic needs of all peoples, produce sustainable economic growth and establish sustainable political practices. It also insures that steps are taken to avoid irreversible damages to natural capital in the long term in return for short-term benefits. The field of sustainable development can be conceptually

⁹ Piasecki, Bruce. 2007. *World Inc.: How the Growing Power of Business is Revolutionizing Profits, People and Future of Both*. Chapter Two, The Panic and Resource of Corporate Leaders. Sourcebooks.

broken into four constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability and political sustainability. Political and social sustainability cannot be considered without examining the role of diversity and inclusion in these areas.

Today's heightened interest in the role of businesses in society has been promoted by increased sensitivity to and awareness of environmental and ethical issues. Issues like environmental damage, improper treatment of workers and faulty production that inconveniences or endangers customers are highlighted in the media and taken seriously by consumers.

In many countries, government regulation regarding environmental and social issues has become more stringent. Additionally, standards and laws are often set at a supranational level (e.g., by the European Union). Increasingly, investors and investment fund managers are taking Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies into account when making investment decisions. This is classified as ethical investing.

Many consumers have become increasingly sensitive to the CSR performance of the companies from which they buy their goods and services. These trends have contributed to the pressure on companies to operate in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) aims to make reporting on economic, environmental, and social performance – sustainability reporting – by all organizations as routine and comparable as financial reporting. To achieve this, the GRI develops, continuously improves and builds capacity around the use of the GRI's Sustainability Reporting Framework. The core of their work revolves around establishing the Sustainability Reporting Guidelines.

This reporting guidance – in the form of principles and indicators – is provided as a free public service and is intended for voluntary use by organizations of all sizes, across all sectors, all around the world.

BUSINESS, COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT

Solving the emerging issues of our time cannot be done in an exclusive environment. Representatives from private industry, the communities impacted, and the government must work collaboratively if sustainable solutions are to be found.

Within each of these sectors, creative solutions can be optimized if a diverse group is employed to solve the issues. Scott Page, a professor at the University of Michigan, in his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, reaffirms the importance of diversity in creative problem-solving, innovation and idea generation. He points out that groups of diverse problem-solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers.¹⁰

If we are to solve environmental issues in a way that optimizes the results, we must insure that we have diverse groups engaged in the problem-solving process and that these teams also represent diversity across sectors.

BUSINESS CASE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION

In private industry a strategic framework for diversity is emerging which is helping to guide diversity efforts. This framework is grounded in a strategic business case which clearly identifies the business imperative for change.

Here are some elements of the business imperative:

- **First, diversity and inclusion is a fundamental part of what people value within corporations.** If we are to fully engage and motivate talent, it cannot be done without a fundamental understanding of difference and the cultural traditions of the diverse population employed.
- **Secondly, customers and consumers are becoming more demanding.** They expect the producers of products targeted at their communities to have workforces that mirror those represented in the community. We are seeing increased advocacy by civil rights groups concerned about the representation of women and people of color in businesses that have located, or are seeking to locate, in their communities.
- **Thirdly, the government, as a watch-dog agency, expects corporate America to be fair in its employment policies and practices.** It has developed processes and inspection systems to ferret out bias, and can impose significant fines and penalties that can have a very significant impact on

¹⁰ Page, Scott. 2007. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, Princeton University Press.

shareholder value, reputation and image as an employer of choice. There is growing collaboration of diversity, affirmative action and human rights advocates around the globe.

- **Fourth, talent pools, particularly for hard-to-fill and technically oriented positions, are shrinking, and the talent available is increasingly diverse.** In a talent-short employment era, options become more readily available to diverse talent, and retention becomes a more significant issue for organizations.
- **Fifth, investors and shareholders are becoming more concerned when companies do not have diverse boards and senior management leaders.** Many investors are requesting detailed information on the demographic make-up of the companies in their portfolios. Many believe that more diverse boards and senior management teams outperform less diverse companies.
- **Sixth and finally, diverse workforces and teams have greater levels of productivity, creativity and engagement.**

Diversity is drawing upon, valuing and respecting the unique characteristics, skills and experiences of all employees. This includes differences in race, gender, age, lifestyle and ethnic background as well as differences in experiences and ideas.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

With the business imperative understood, leaders need to establish a framework for improvement and change. This framework must start with leaders' role modeling inclusive behaviors in the organization, establishing clear accountability and expectations for results, and addressing specific actions for employee education, talent acquisition, development and retention. Cultural and work climate issues that create barriers for diverse talent have to be addressed, and proactive outreach strategies (community, supplier and customer) with key external groups cannot be ignored.

Specific measures and performance indicators should be established, and performance monitored on a regular basis to assure focus and the anticipated results. More progressive companies are tying variable pay awards to diversity results.

IN SUMMARY

We all live in one world. This world is rich in its biodiversity and human diversity. If we are to sustain the integrity of the place with which we have been entrusted, we must protect it with passion and with dedication. The quality of the environment in which we live is the most significant part of the legacy we will leave for future generations.

The environmental movement has plenty of room for increasing diversity in its ranks. The movement would be well served to build the “environmental case” for diversity just as corporations build the “business case.” The movement cannot be indifferent to the need to diversify and to be more inclusive.

The environmental movement would be better served to capture within their ranks the talent of the growing demographic of talented people of color. As the movement tackles global issues, they will encounter different races, cultures, values and issues. The richness of a diverse workforce and pipeline is important and should be carefully considered in any implementation strategy.

The great conservationist Aldo Leopold said:

Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifact called civilization. Wilderness was never a homogenous raw material. It was very diverse, and the resulting artifacts are very diverse. These differences in the end product are known as cultures. The rich diversity of the world's cultures reflects a corresponding diversity in the wilds that gave them birth.¹¹

In the end, the question posed by the young African-American boy in New Orleans symbolizes the question the environmental movement, global corporations, and governments need to answer.

“*What is we gonna do?*”

I believe the answer is pretty self-evident.

¹¹ Leopold, Aldo. 1949. “Wilderness” from *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches from Here and There*, Oxford University Press.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Generating Change: Why Reaching a Diverse Environmental Citizenry is Important for the Future of the Environmental Movement

Chip Giller, Founder and President, Grist

SUMMARY

As editor of a website that strives to inspire environmental passion in a young, diverse readership, the author has seen firsthand the necessity of overcoming perceptions that the environmental movement is a niche issue reserved solely for the privileged. Using examples of his journalistic work and profiles of activists, he argues that this perception must be demolished, and the movement itself must be redefined, for progress to be made.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, environmental movement, environment, environmental justice, citizenry, media

My wife and I had our first child in the spring of 2006, and among the many surprises in store was one I hadn't really expected: my daughter's arrival changed my personal sense of environmentalism. I had spent years writing and speaking about the importance of protecting the planet for future generations. But now "future generations" was my child, in my arms. And the planet shrank to become my house, in my neighborhood. Suddenly all these environmental notions seemed much more concrete.

Just before my daughter was born, another event in my life brought the same idea home. I had been immersed in publishing a seven-week series on environmental justice in *Grist*, the online media organization I founded eight years ago. The series raised questions for devoted activists and general readers alike about who bears the brunt of the U.S. environmental burden. The answer: those living in poverty, which all too often in this country means people of color.

It was a glum series, to be honest, but it also offered moments of hope. Profiles of local activists around the country revealed astonishing breadth and energy. These were people fighting against pollution and development and resource abuses. And they were also fighting *for* something: their health, their families, their homes, their ways of life.

These stories made it more clear to me than ever that the environment is not, as some people think, an external playground to be enjoyed by weekend warriors. It is in fact the daily living and breathing space we all inhabit.

These stories made it more clear to me than ever that the environment is not, as some people think, an external playground to be enjoyed by weekend warriors. It is in fact the daily living and breathing space we all inhabit.

I hope my daughter comes of age in a culture that has made concrete green progress. Perhaps we'll have weaned ourselves from fossil fuels, phased out incandescent light bulbs, kept billboards out of our national parks, adopted smart-growth laws that make cities walkable, and enacted pollution regulations that protect all of our

citizens, no matter what their ethnicity or income. I do want her to see a greener, cleaner planet.

But more than that, I hope she comes of age in a culture where there is no environmental movement.

I don't mean that the issues will be resolved or the people working on them will have lost an ounce of passion. I don't mean the movement is dead, as was notoriously claimed a couple of years ago. I mean that environmentalism as a concept has become bigger than the movement's founders ever imagined. The movement we need now – and the one I see taking shape – is broader, stronger, and more far-reaching than ever before.

There is still great value in the strengths of traditional environmental activism. But as businesses, politicians, and citizens wake up to the realities of climate change, issues once tidily boxed up as environmental are infiltrating every aspect of life. The food we eat, the fuel we buy, the way we get around – these daily choices, humanity is realizing, may affect our very survival as a species. And no one is left out of this equation.

There is still great value in the strengths of traditional environmental activism. But as businesses, politicians, and citizens wake up to the realities of climate change, issues once tidily boxed up as environmental are infiltrating every aspect of life. The food we eat, the fuel we buy, the way we get around – these daily choices, humanity is realizing, may affect our very survival as a species. And no one is left out of this equation.

Building on the invaluable work of the social justice organizers – and of activists who don't align themselves with any movement, but know they don't want a refinery in their backyards – environmentalism has a chance to breach its traditional boundaries and grow stronger. This movement has its roots in a healthy respect for wide-open spaces, but it should strive to become a wide-open movement with a healthy respect for people's roots.

This isn't just a nice idea, the next touchy-feely step in the evolution of a movement often defined by its predilection for embracing trees. It's a necessity.

Some people may cling to the environmentalism of old, may worry that a broader, more diverse movement will somehow be weakened. To those holdouts, I say: without expanding the environmental message beyond the privileged ears it has historically reached, without changing our own definitions of environmentalism to include the challenges faced every day in neighborhoods across the country and around the world, we put the survival of this movement at risk. There are too many people facing too many struggles for environmentalism to remain the province of any one class, race, faith, or political ideology.

FIGHTING BACK

How were we going to be Indian people when we couldn't use a simple thing like water, or eat our wild rice or go pick berries or get our deer meat . . . things that we need for our feasts or parts of our ceremonies? I think that's why everyone fought so hard for so long, because we had to. Otherwise we felt that we'd just be like everybody else.

– Tina van Zile, Sokaogon Chippewa activist,
Mole Lake, Wisconsin

For years, the Sokaogon Chippewa in Mole Lake, Wisconsin, fought the proposed reopening of a zinc mine on land adjacent to the tribe's reservation, fearing the contamination of both their natural resources and their way of life. One of the poorest tribes in the U.S., the group eventually managed to scrape together enough money to pay off the mine's mortgage – money that the mining company then decided to put into a conservation trust fund for the tribe.

It was a story with a seemingly happy ending, but it reflects the disturbing trend we at *Grist* worked to shed light on in our series: many of the worst environmental ills are visited upon those who can least afford to combat them. For example, a recent study in the San Francisco Bay Area found that two-thirds of the residents living within a mile of polluting sources monitored by the EPA – where housing is more affordable than farther afield – are people of color, and one-third are white. Venture 2.5 miles or more from the source, and the percentages flip.

This isn't just coincidence. It's part of a pattern of economic and social injustice that has created environmental inequities as well. You can't fight one without fighting the other.

From the beginning, *Grist* has done its best to turn the established notion of environmentalism on its head and to encourage readers to understand issues in a new context. We consider it our responsibility to expand our readers' definition of *environment* by drawing attention to under-reported topics and to encourage them to exercise their influence however they can, wherever they can.

Our series on poverty and the environment caught the eyes of millions of readers, because it drew new connections. It showed that environmentalism is not a pet cause pursued by the elite, somewhere between dropping the kids off at soccer practice and grabbing a chai latte. It is a daily struggle.

It is the Chippewa fighting a mine and fighting to preserve their heritage. It is Jesus People Against Pollution, an activist group in an historically African-American town in Mississippi, confronting the chemical legacy of a local Superfund site. It is Latino workers in industrial chicken farms seeking fair treatment, and it is impoverished residents of the South Bronx using the corporate scrap heaps that litter their neighborhood to rebuild it.

Understanding the scope and the shape and the colors of these battles, in the U.S. and beyond, is a vital step. Understanding that this is the face of today's environmentalism is crucial. But the next step is even more important: thinking and talking about how to honor diversity while lending each other support. How to create a whole and healthy movement from so many disparate causes and struggles.

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It's worth noting that one of the Chippewa's primary concerns was making sure the tribe didn't end up "like everybody else." So how can we value and preserve our differences while still building upon each other's strengths? And how can environmentalism expand to encompass this complex balancing act?

"This whole question of environment, economics, and equity is a three-legged stool," environmental justice leader Robert Bullard told *Grist*. "If the third leg of that stool is dealt with as an afterthought, that stool won't stand. The equity components have to be given equal weight. But racial and economic and social equity can be very painful topics: people get uncomfortable when questions of poor people and race are raised."

LOOKING FORWARD

People have to overcome all kinds of terrible things, and they manage to do it and survive – and survive with such dignity. Those kinds of stories need to be told. And shame on us who don't listen, who put ourselves in a cocoon.

– Marlene Grossman, Pacoima Beautiful activist, Los Angeles

In late 2004, when environmentalism was declared "dead" by Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, we published their essay in *Grist*. Alongside it, we ran the months' worth of feedback and dialogue that it generated. Almost immediately, we noticed, writers of color jumped into the fray. Traditional, mostly white, environmentalism may be dead, they said, but take a look at what's going on in communities of color. Take a look at the progress that has been made, and at the struggles still surfacing.

It was a truth that could have been easy to miss, if we weren't looking. The mainstream green groups with a high profile in the U.S. – the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council, for example – are predominantly white. Think about it: when was the last time Jesus People Against Pollution made the pages of *The Washington Post*?

But anyone watching closely knows that environmentalism has indeed changed over the last few decades. Not just the race and class of those who are involved, but the methods they use. Gone are the days

when Theodore Roosevelt waved his wand and established national protection for sweeping vistas. Today's environmentalism is a patchwork of local battles – albeit local battles often involving multinational corporations. Many of these battles are fought not out of desire, but out of necessity.

Even our biggest global challenge, climate change, has been addressed most effectively in recent years on a local or regional level – from agreements among mayors and states to activism by Los Angelenos who want their children's buses to stop spewing diesel fumes. Of course, this is due in part to the stubborn reluctance of the country's leaders to take action on the issue – a political stalemate that already looks to be shifting. I have no doubt that, going forward, national action will be a crucial part of achieving our goals. But ultimately, today's environmentalism is also a collection of passionate, vocal, strident defenders of life and home and neighborhood.

It is a mass of people exercising the influence that they can, where they can.

It's a political shift that has affected those of us who call ourselves environmentalists, and even – perhaps especially – those of us who don't. Together, we are working toward a better, safer world. Our challenge now is to combine and channel this energy into new solutions. Our mandate is to leave this world, and this movement, better than we found it.

The environmental movement will only be truly effective if it keeps expanding its constituency and counteracting its reputation as the province of the privileged. To do so, the movement must cross the boundaries of ethnicity, gender, age, and class. This shift will help broaden the definition of what it means to be an *environmentalist* and will connect the movement to groups that historically have been underrepresented in environmental politics. It will also foster the sharing of differing perspectives that can stimulate creative problem-solving on environmental issues.

But it cannot happen without the work of every single person reading this book, and everyone else you know. Only when we can come together to protect our rights to a life without pollution or peril will we succeed. Only by recognizing each other's strengths and differences will we be worthy of that success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chip Giller founded *Grist* magazine in 1999 to lighten up a movement known for taking itself too seriously and to engage an audience that might otherwise be turned off by depressing environmental news. *Grist* now has an audience of 800,000 and has been especially successful in reaching readers in their 20's and 30's. Giller, 36, received the Jane Bagley Lehman Award for Excellence in Public Advocacy from the Tides Foundation in 2004 in recognition of

the vital role *Grist* is playing in increasing environmental awareness. In both 2006 and 2005, *Grist* received a Webby Award, described by The New York Times as "the Oscar of the Internet." In 2006, the National Wildlife Federation honored Giller's achievements with its National Conservation Award. Giller's work and views have also been featured in media outlets like *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *Fast Company*, and *Outside*. Before launching *Grist*, Giller was editor of *Greenwire*, the first environmental news daily. Giller graduated from Brown University with an honors degree in environmental studies. He is a senior fellow with the Environmental Leadership Program.

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Action: The Next Step Toward Achieving Diversity and Inclusivity in the U.S. Environmental Movement

*Emily Enderle, Master of Environmental Management '07,
Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies*

SUMMARY

This is the final chapter in the book *Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement*, which explores the reasons why diversity and inclusion are imperative for the future of the environmental movement in the United States. In this piece, the volume editor summarizes definitions and principles fundamental to diversity and inclusivity, explores reasons and tactics for creating an inclusive organization and movement, drawing on the work of several authors who have studied the implications of diversity in organizations as well as personal experiences. She also offers suggestions on how to take appropriate diversification action, applicable to various organizations and disciplines.

KEY WORDS

Diversity, inclusivity, environmental movement, modeling, organizational psychology, business case, best practices

Diversity is a foundational concept for environmentalists. Conservation organizations protect biodiversity; river restoration specialists work to achieve diverse river systems; energy companies and countries diversify their energy portfolios; ecologists promote ecosystem diversity; foresters manage diverse species in diverse landscapes. We have known for centuries that diversity makes these systems stronger, more stable, and more resilient. And yet, environmentalists have never extended that same thinking about the value of diversity to the environmental movement itself.

To be fair, the idea that human diversity is important to the environmental movement is widely recognized, but the reasons why diversity is important – what value diversity adds to an organization or to the movement – are rarely articulated and poorly understood. Without a proper understanding of why we should encourage diversity, our commitment is merely rhetorical or, even worse, it results in inappropriate action that actually hinders diversification of the movement. It is my contention that if these problems continue to exist, the environmental movement in the U.S. will become ineffective as the country continues to become more diverse.¹

Without a proper understanding of why we should encourage diversity, our commitment is merely rhetorical or, even worse, it results in inappropriate action that actually hinders diversification of the movement. It is my contention that if these problems continue to exist, the environmental movement in the U.S. will become ineffective as the country continues to become more diverse.

WHY PHASE OUT EXCLUSION?

An organization's success is dependent on its ability to adapt to change and to overcome obstacles, old and new. How will an organization react when faced with a completely unfamiliar situation? If it is comprised of diverse individuals who have learned the value of collaborative efforts,

¹ According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2010 1 in every 3 people is projected to be non-white and by 2050, every 1 in 2.

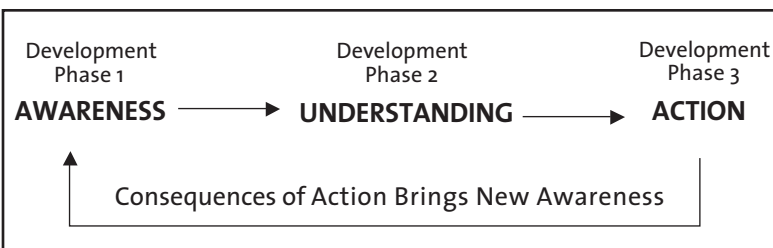
it will react energetically, adeptly, and successfully. The interaction among people from diverse backgrounds fosters analytical thinking and enhances problem-solving by improving the ability of organizations to see things from different angles. Increasing our ability to approach obstacles from multiple perspectives increases the chance that we will overcome them. This means that diversity and inclusion, if understood and implemented properly, will give strength to our organizations, our disciplines and our movement, resulting in a more functional and effective environmentalism.

THE TRANSITION FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION

In these concluding remarks, I first summarize definitions and principles fundamental to diversity and inclusivity. Second, I recap a few of the ideas presented in the preceding pages and include additional reasons and tactics for creating an inclusive organization and movement. Third, I draw on the work of several authors who have already made valuable contributions, in a number of different fields, to the study and promotion of diversity in organizations to make some suggestions on how to take action. My suggestions focus on ways to achieve the valuable diverse communities envisioned in this volume and include insights on how to better integrate diversity and inclusion into the three social systems considered in this book – environmental organizations, disciplinary fields and the U.S. environmental movement itself.

Education is key to moving past the development phase of awareness to the subsequent stages. My remarks are meant less as a conclusion than as an introduction to the next steps, gaining a new understanding of the importance of diversity and taking action, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Learning Process for Diversity Competency²



² Beale, Ruby and Cox, Taylor. 1997. *Understanding Competency for Managing Diversity*. San Francisco, CA. Berrett-Koehler: 5.

DEFINING DIVERSITY, VALUING DIVERSITY, CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND MANAGING DIVERSITY

In her 1995 book on implementing diversity in corporate organizations, *Implementing Diversity*, Marilyn Loden's identifies a fitting environmental analogy:

Like trees in a vast forest, humans come in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors. This variety helps to differentiate us. While we share the important dimension of humanness with all members of our species, there are biological and environmental differences that separate and distinguish us as individuals and groups. It is this vast array of physical and cultural differences that constitute the spectrum of human diversity.³

While recognizing that the types of diverse groups that need to be included are essentially limitless, there are some key dimensions this movement needs to focus on. These include people of various ages, ethnicities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, physical abilities, races, sexual orientations, religions, educational and work experiences, and disciplinary expertise.

To guide successful diversity and inclusion processes, it is important to understand several common terms associated with diversity work. Table 1 presents definitions of key terms that should be understood in order to properly execute the steps necessary to progress through the developmental phases of diversifying our organizations and movement.

Table 1 Key Definitions

Term	Definition
Diversity⁴	A mix of people in one social system who have distinctly different, socially relevant group affiliations.
Inclusivity	A social system where perspectives from people of all backgrounds are equally considered, respected and incorporated into environmental decision making and all are involved in the challenge to improve the planet.

³ Loden, Marilyn. 1995. *Implementing Diversity*. McGraw-Hill: 14.

⁴ Cox, Taylor. 1993. *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research and Practice*. San Francisco, CA. Berrett-Koehler: 6.

Diversity Competency ⁵	A process of learning that leads to an ability to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by the presence of social-cultural diversity in a defined social system.
Valuing Diversity ⁶	A philosophy about how diversity affects organizational outcomes that holds that the presence of diversity represents a distinct organizational resource that, properly leveraged, can bring a competitive advantage against organizations that either are culturally homogenous or fail to successfully utilize their diversity.
Managing Diversity ⁷	Managing diversity consists of taking proactive steps to create and sustain an organizational climate in which the potential for diversity-related dynamics to hinder performance is minimized and the potential for diversity to enhance performance is maximized.

PRINCIPLES FUNDAMENTAL TO ACHIEVING INCLUSIVITY

In *Implementing Diversity*, Loden identifies the following beliefs as the basis for valuing diversity:

Belief #1: Valuing diversity requires long-term culture change.

Belief #2: Valuing diversity is good for people and good for business.

Belief #3: Valuing diversity implementation must be inclusive, not exclusive.

Belief #4: Valuing diversity benefits everyone.⁸

These beliefs are fundamental to achieving inclusive organizations and an inclusive movement. To understand the logic behind these beliefs it is necessary to first answer the tough questions and be comfortable with being uncomfortable: “Why is diversity important to me, my environmental organization and my movement?” One of the objectives of this volume is to provide the headspace for readers to ask

⁵ Beale, R. and Cox, T. Op. cit.: 2.

⁶ Ibid: 13.

⁷ Ibid: 13-14.

⁸ Loden, Op. cit. 62.

themselves these tough questions and construct personal perspectives on the topic. A second objective is that it will serve as a catalyst, inspiring more engaged thought and ultimately intelligent and appropriate action rooted in the appreciation of these beliefs.

The environmental movement is currently in the grip of groupthink – “a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ striving for unanimity overrides their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”⁹ I would challenge those who count themselves members of this movement to break out of groupthink and engage with the ideas presented in this book despite the discomfort.

RATIONALES FOR DIVERSITY WORK

There are several rationales for increasing the diversity of our movement. First of all, there is strong evidence that diversity strengthens social systems (something I will return to later in my remarks). Taylor Cox and Ruby Beale offer basic moral and ethical arguments “such as fairness and upholding the dignity of every person,” as well as straightforward legal arguments, such as “honoring civil rights laws.” But in cases where creating successful social systems is the imperative, such moral imperatives have limited traction. I would argue, more practically, that diversity and inclusion are essential for the preservation of the movement, and that the reasons why so many U.S. businesses have sought to diversify both their workforce and their target audiences could be instructive for the environmental movement.

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While I tend to believe that more practical arguments will be the most compelling to diverse audiences as we strive to expand the movement, I recognize that having a wide variety of rationales enhances

⁹ Janis, Irving L. 1972. *Victims of Groupthink*. Boston. Houghton Mifflin: 9.

the overall justification for diversity work. In the context of this book it also enables meaningful connections that resonate with people interested in understanding an extensive set of reasons or those interested in understanding the value for a specific discipline or type of organization.

As the U.S. begins to realize our “demographic destiny,”¹⁰ it is apparent that this movement will soon have to reflect the national population or become increasingly ineffective at achieving our organizational missions.¹¹ Changing demographics are leading to an increase in minority constituency power as well as an increase in the financial influence of minority populations. Donor organizations, many of which environmental organizations rely on for funding, are increasingly considering diversity in their funding decisions. The Ford Foundation, for example, explains that “the opportunities that prospective grantee organizations provide for women and other disadvantaged groups are considered in evaluating proposals.”¹²

The changing demographics also have broad implications for the fiscal health of the movement in the future. The buying power of under-represented groups has increased considerably in recent years, suggesting that donor power is also increasing. Table 2 below quantifies buying power by race. Further, figures released by Out & Equal and market-research firms Witeck-Combs and Harris Interactive estimate that the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender population segment (5 percent) had a buying power of \$641 billion in 2006 and are projected to reach \$1 trillion in 2012.¹³ These numbers signify more than an extension of the typical pool of potential donors; these people will also expand the group of consumers who are considering purchasing green products. Being inclusive in donor efforts and in the advertising of green products will both strengthen the financial foundations of the movement and increase the number of people invested in it.

¹⁰ “Demographic destiny” references reaching the projected demographic shifts in the population “which necessitate that organizations value diversity, since the majority of new entrants into the labor force will be women, people of color, and immigrants.” Loden op. cit: 91.

¹¹ For additional information on the demographic shifts in the U.S. see *Framing the Discussion* by this author and *Diversifying the American Environmental Movement* by Bonta and Jordan, this volume.

¹² Ford Foundation Webpage – Guidelines for Grant Seekers. <http://www.fordfound.org/about/guideline.cfm>. Accessed from the World Wide Web May 2007.

¹³ Out & Equal Press Release. <http://outandequal.org/news/headlines/PFLAG.asp>. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

Table 2 Buying Power by Race (\$ billions)¹⁴

	1990	2000	2006	2111
White	4,470.5	7,187.6	9,525.5	12,364.0
Non-Hispanic	4,058.7	6,698.3	8,727.2	11,184.9
Hispanic	211.9	489.4	798.3	1,180.0
Black	318.1	590.2	798.9	1,1071.7
American Indian	19.7	39.1	53.9	73.0
Asian	116.5	268.8	426.9	621.5
Multiracial	0.0	58.3	86.3	119.4

A BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY

Prior to graduate school, I worked as a corporate environmental consultant for a Woman Owned Business (WBE), Kearns & West Inc. in San Francisco. At Kearns & West, creating a diverse and inclusive community was a top priority. Their achievements in this area strengthened the organization, generating profitable and efficient connections, strategies and deliverables from teams that included people from different backgrounds, specializations and ideas. Additionally, the firm was able to gain a competitive advantage by being a WBE, often being awarded preferential points in state and national procurement processes.

The U.S. government and individual states encourage their agencies to contract Small Business Enterprises and WBE's, as well as Veteran Owned Businesses, Minority Owned Businesses and Disability Business Enterprises. Many governing bodies require that a certain percentage of their business be directed to these types of businesses annually. In some processes, these businesses receive points based on their status, which helps boost their scores as government agencies assess possible contractors. This allows for organizations owned by underrepresented groups to differentiate themselves from the field of competition.

It is evident that there are multiple ways for value to be added by engaging a diverse staff in corporate consulting, which is one of the reasons the corporate world is quickly diversifying.¹⁵ The same values

¹⁴ Humphreys, Jeffrey M. 2006. *The Multicultural Economy*, The University of Georgia, <http://www.selig.uga.edu/forecast/GBEC/GBEC063Q.pdf>. Georgia Business and Economic Conditions. Volume 66, Number 14 3. Third Quarter 2006. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

¹⁵ For additional information on the business case rationale for diversity, see Indifference to Cultural Inclusion: Not an Option in the Global Environmental Movement by Effenus Henderson, this volume. Additionally, A Personal View on the Importance and Imperative of Diversity Work by Felicia Marcus in this volume considers specifically how the business case applies to non-profit organizations.

can be obtained by environmental organizations that are looking for ways to strengthen their organizations and differentiate themselves as they bid for contracts, submit proposals for project funding and attract clients, members and/or funding.

EVIDENCE THAT DIVERSITY STRENGTHENS SOCIAL SYSTEMS

While many corporate organizations have been tracking diversity-related performance for years, there has been little empirically significant information produced considering diversity's impact on environmental organizations. Because of the lack of environmental organization related information, I'll now turn to a few authors who have made significant contributions to the literature on the organizational benefits of diversity in similar organizations.

Recently, Scott Page, a political scientist, published a dynamic addition to the diversity discussion, the book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, which explains the procedure and results of his work modeling heterogeneous and homogeneous organizations. The results demonstrate that there is greater collective potential present in heterogeneous organizations than in homogeneous ones, providing quantifiable support for the anecdotal assertions that diversity is beneficial. The models convey the following core messages that provide support for the promotion of diversity, but only when diversity is implemented properly:

- 1) Diverse perspectives and tools enable collections of people to find more and better solutions and contribute to overall productivity;
- 2) Diverse predictive models enable crowds of people to predict values accurately.¹⁶

Page's work quantifying the benefits and costs of diversity is extremely helpful. First, it provides corroboration, connecting models and numbers with anecdotal evidence. Second, it provides another way to frame the discussion, making it less touchy-feely and more concrete. Finally, it provides insight about appropriate strategies for constructing strong organizations. He writes:

¹⁶ Page, Scott. 2007. *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*. Princeton University Press: 13.

In choosing a team, admitting a class, or hiring employees, our concern should not be the average ability of the people hired, chosen or admitted. Our concerns should be collective performance, which depends as much on collective diversity as it does on individual ability.¹⁷

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE MODELS

In her work, Marilyn Loden introduces the concept of a diversity adoption curve, spreading people across a spectrum of those ready for action and those resistant.¹⁸ She goes on to explain that “diverse segments require diverse strategies.”¹⁹ To be sensitive to this reality, there are many developmental stage models that can be used as guides when transitioning from a non-inclusive organization to one that is. One set of developmental stages that is especially relevant to the environmental movement is the Dismantling Racism spectrum.²⁰ The stages progress from an All-White Club, to a Token or Affirmative Action Organization, a Multi-Cultural Organization, and finally an Anti-Racist Organization. These stages are characterized below in Table 3.

Table 3 Dismantling Racism Transitional Stages²¹

Classification	Organizational Characteristics
The All-White Club	All-White Clubs are organizations that, without trying, find themselves with an all white organization. These are not groups that have intentionally excluded people of color. In fact, many times they have developed recruitment plans to get more people of color involved in their group. However, when people of color join the group, they are essentially asked to fit into the existing culture. Many leave after a frustrating period of trying to be heard.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Loden, Op. cit: 40.

¹⁹ Ibid.: 59.

²⁰ Dismantling Racism is a model adapted by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun based on work done by the Exchange Project of the Peace Development Fund, Grassroots Leadership's Barriers and Bridges program, and the original concept by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman. The model is currently used by organizations nationwide. National Lawyers Guild Website. Anti-Racist Organizational Development. http://www.nlg.org/TUPOCC/Anti_Racist_Org_Assessment_part_1.doc. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

²¹ Ibid.

	<p>After years of trying, the Club cannot figure out why they do not have more people of color in their group; they begin to blame people of color for not being interested in the group’s important issue or work, or they just give up. They do not understand that without analyzing and changing the organizational culture, norms, and power relations, they will always be an All-White Club. While they are good people, they have no analysis of racism or of power relations and no accountability to people or communities of color.</p>
<p>The Affirmative Action or ‘Token’ Organization</p>	<p>The Affirmative Action or ‘Token’ Organization is committed to eliminating discrimination in hiring and promotion.</p> <p>The Affirmative Action or ‘Token’ Organization sets clear affirmative action goals, clear and unambiguous job qualifications and criteria, a percentage of people of color who need to be in a candidate pool for a new job, and a bias-reduced interview process. Staff and board are encouraged to reduce and/or eliminate their prejudice and the organization may conduct prejudice reduction workshops toward this end. There may be one or two people of color in leadership positions. For people of color, coming into the organization feels like little more than tokenism.</p> <p>The Affirmative Action of ‘Token’ Organization is still basically an All-White Club except it now includes structural and legal means to bring people of color in.</p>
<p>The Multi-Cultural Organization</p>	<p>The Multi-Cultural Organization reflects the contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and products or services.</p> <p>It actively recruits and welcomes people of color and celebrates having a diverse staff and board. It is committed to reducing prejudice within the group and offers programs that help members learn more about the diverse cultures that make up the organization. White people in the organization tend to feel good about the commitment to diversity. Like the previous two, however, people of color are still asked to join the dominant culture and fit in.</p> <p>An interesting point to consider is that many multi-national corporations are at this stage, while most non-profits, even social change non-profits, are still predominantly in one of the first two stages. Multi-national corporations recognize that their financial</p>

	<p>success is tied to their customer base and their customer base is racially diverse. So, for example, in states where there are active English-only campaigns, the banks are offering ATM machines in English and Spanish. This is not to say we should automatically model ourselves after multi-national corporations, but it is worth thinking about how they are further ahead than most of us in thinking about the implications of a changing demographic for their organization.</p>
<p>The Anti-Racist Organization</p>	<p>Based on an analysis of the history of racism and power in this country, this organization supports the development of anti-racist white allies and empowered people of color through the organization's culture, norms, policies and procedures.</p> <p>The Anti-Racist Organization integrates this commitment into the program, helping white people work together and challenge each other around issues of racism, share power with people of color, take leadership from and be accountable to people of color, feel comfortable with being uncomfortable while understanding that we are all learning all the time. The Anti-Racist Organization helps people of color become more empowered through taking leadership, sharing in the power, transforming the organizational norms and culture, challenging white allies and other people of color, sharing in decisions about how the organizations resources will be spent, what work gets done as well as how it gets done, the setting of priorities, and allowing people of color to make the same mistakes as white people. The organization does this by forming white and people of color caucuses, providing training and encouraging discussions about racism, white privilege, power, and accountability, setting clear standards for inclusion at all levels of the organization, reviewing the mission, vision, policies, procedures, board agreements, etc. to ensure that the commitment to end racism is a consistent theme, helping people to understand the links between the oppressions, and devoting organizational time and resources to building relationships across race and other barriers.</p>

ACCEPTING DIVERSIFICATION AS A DYNAMIC PROCESS

It is important to understand that there is never going to be an absolute right way to diversity, just as there will never be a perfect template for

creating inclusion in our organizations. There will be failures and we will learn from those failures. Additionally there will be diversity efforts that work for one organization but will not work for another. Though these realities may seem daunting, these are great things – learning from our mistakes is what keeps our organizations fresh and demonstrates that our systems are resilient.

We must be intentional and intelligent about how to incorporate diversity into each organization. Taking on diversity work for the sake of saying we're doing something is not the goal – implementing diversity programs that will genuinely enhance our institutions is what is needed. We must think intentionally about what diversity measures need to exist and do what it takes to make those measures successful.

Although diversity is context-sensitive, there is diversity work that can be done in each organization that can improve the way we pursue our organizational missions. For example, a corporation may need to hire qualified candidates from underrepresented backgrounds to generate new ideas or to help attract a wider range of customers, whereas a small non-governmental organization may need to engage underrepresented communities in projects where there are mutual gains to be realized or to hire a diverse group of staff to effectively involve new communities.

As you examine ways to diversify the social system you're working with, it's important to consider Scott Page's words:

If individual diversity contributes to collective benefits, we should pursue pro-diversity policies. Companies, organizations, and universities that hire and admit diverse people should not expect instant results. But, in the long run, diversity should produce benefits. I do not advocate sacrificing ability for diversity, but rather balancing the two.²²

Understanding that diversity work is a dynamic process will be helpful in creating a more valuable collective that will enhance our social systems.

Organizational Development Tools

Certain concepts offered by organizational psychology are important tools that can be used to eliminate groupthink and create more diverse

²² Page, Op. cit: 369-370.

and inclusive organizations. The business case for diversity has been evolving for decades and organizational psychology has studied the implications of diversity within businesses extensively. The environmental movement can glean excellent theories and tools from this field.

In the book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Dr. Robert B. Cialdini identifies “tools of influence” that are helpful to use when implementing organizational strategies that will create value for individuals throughout the organizational structure. Of the six principles explored in the book, two are particularly germane when implementing diversity strategies in the social systems examined in this book – *social proofing* and *commitment and consistency*.

Social proofing is the concept that we perceive behavior as correct in a given situation to the degree that we see others performing it. One often-used example is that if a person sees tips in a tip jar at a coffee shop or restaurant, that person is more likely to insert a tip. Having organizational leaders perform proactive diversity management in a visible setting has extensive social proofing potential because hearing and seeing something repeated by a leader is a social proof that filters down through the ranks and ultimately changes the behavior of many. For an idea to fully adopted, it needs to be seen as a priority from the top. Motivating many people to do and say the same thing will achieve similar results. This is where the use of dynamic leaders comes into play – getting a leader to perform as a diversity leader will inspire replicative behavior. Over time this will result in a culture where the leader and a large number of people are providing social proof that diversity is important.

Commitment and consistency is an equally important tool of influence to use. Demonstrated commitment and consistency to a vision increases the likelihood that others will be committed and consistent as well. This principle is based on the concept that once a person makes a choice or takes a stand, that person doesn’t want to appear inconsistent. Embedded within us is the idea that once an action is taken, we see ourselves differently. In the case of committing to diversity, this suggests that once people are on board they will remain on board and operate in ways that demonstrate their commitment.

Principles and Best Practices

There are two guiding principles that continually surface in the vast literature on diversity. First, while change must occur at every level of an organization and the implementation of diversity initiatives must be

precise and persistent, it's necessary for committed leaders to guide the process. Second, diversifying for the sake of diversity accomplishes nothing and can even have negative impacts on a social system.

There are two guiding principles that continually surface in the vast literature on diversity. First, while change must occur at every level of an organization and the implementation of diversity initiatives must be precise and persistent, it's necessary for committed leaders to guide the process. Second, diversifying for the sake of diversity accomplishes nothing and can even have negative impacts on a social system.

It is helpful for all organizations to be considerate of these two principles, as well as the related implementation principles identified by Loden:

- 1) The ongoing involvement and preparedness of the core leadership team is the single most important factor in predicting implementation success;
- 2) The diversity mindset is what separates effective facilitators and managers from those who play or pay lip service to the need for change.”²³

There are numerous best practices that have been identified with respect to diversifying organizations. Because diversification of each organization is a unique process — one that is customized to the individual characteristics of each organization so as to best enable the organization to adapt to change — it is helpful to consider multiple sets of best practices when constructing a guiding framework. I selected two sets that can provide insight to any organization.

Best Practices in Diversity Management²⁴

- *Leadership* – The success of diversity and inclusivity rely on the thoughts and actions of leaders. Executive development is

²³ Loden, Op. cit.: 128 and 61.

²⁴ Adapted from Thomas, K. and Davis, J. Chapter 3: Best Practices in Diversity Management. *Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace: Issues and Challenges for Today's Organizations. Volume 3: Organizational Practices and Individual Strategies for Women and Minorities.* Praeger Publishers: Westport, CT 2006: 73-77.

essential for equipping leaders with the skills to be most effective.

- o *Goal setting* – Not to be confused with illegal quotas, examples of goal setting can be, for example, to establish relationships with minority communities.
- o *Framing* – Positive framing is needed. Instead of framing diversity as a barrier to effectiveness, frame diversity as an opportunity for improved performance.
- o *Accountability* – Tie practices like selection, promotion, compensation to the consideration and execution of diversity goals and values.
- o *Readiness* – Explore individual and organizational contexts for diversity – to understand the impact of power dynamics in both cases.
- *Recruitment* – The number of minority people is increasing rapidly – in the workforce, it is estimated that labor force growth will occur in non-white segments.²⁵ The demographic representation of individuals in advertisements and the associated messages needs to be inclusive.²⁶

10 Best Practices for Implementing Diversity²⁷

- Set the context for change.
- Provide ongoing communication.
- Develop knowledgeable and committed leaders.
- Focus on data-driven change.
- Provide awareness and skill-based training.
- Encourage ongoing learning.
- Establish multicultural mentoring.
- Provide flexible benefits/scheduling.
- Link rewards to effective diversity management.
- Build common ground.

²⁵ Bureau of Labor Statistics. Projections of the civil labor force through 2012 by sex, race, age, and Hispanic origin. <http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2004/02/art3full.pdf>. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

²⁶ Loden, Op. cit.:166-173.

²⁷ Ibid.

ENVIRONMENTALISM NEEDS TO MOVE FORWARD

Properly diversifying environmental organizations and disciplinary fields is necessary for the survival and future success of the environmental movement. We can no longer simply acknowledge that diversity is important. It is the time for further action - first growing to understand why diversity and inclusion are beneficial followed by immediate action to incorporate inclusion into our organizational frameworks. The absence of one of these steps restricts progress and hinders the work we do as we strive to achieve the missions of our organizations.

As Bryan Garcia points out in his piece in this volume, *21st Century Environmentalists: Diversity, Hope, Unity, and Action for a Better World*, a more diverse movement is necessary to move beyond the liberal, white middle- and upper-class stigmas long associated with environmentalists. The underrepresented segment of the U.S. population have been left unengaged for too long. All must be part of this movement to achieve sustainability.

The future of this movement lies in our ability to prohibit exclusion. Like our environment, our population is always changing and therefore the task of making our movement more inclusive will never be complete. The process of making our movement more diverse is just that, a process. While it requires constant effort, it can yield impressive rewards. Empirical evidence from many types of organizations has demonstrated that a diverse organization can outperform one that is not. Interaction between diverse people spawns fresh questions, ideas, and answers while promoting collaborative, united teamwork. This is the ultimate goal of diversity.

In the simplest sense diversity is about uniting people from different backgrounds. However, a deeper examination shows that diversity and inclusion are not just about uniting different people, but about creating value for ourselves, our organizations and our movement. As this nation grows, socially, economically, and culturally so too must we.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Enderle received a Master of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) in 2007. At Yale, she concentrated in policy, economics and law, focusing on energy issues and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Prior to her time at F&ES, she worked as a corporate environmental consultant, specializing in energy issues, in the San Francisco office of Kearns & West Inc. She graduated with high honors in environmental studies from Oberlin College in 2003. Increasing diversity and inclusivity within the environmental movement is her personal passion – one she hopes more of the members of the environmental movement will embrace and actively support.

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Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement

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